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CLARE ABBEY;

OR, THE

TRIALS OF YOUTH.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

“THE DISCIPLINE OF LIFE, ETC.”

Awed and dazzled, bending I confess,
Life may have nobler ends than happiness.

KING ARTHUR.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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L I F E.

I made a posy while the day ran by ;
Here will I smell my remnant out, and tie
 My life within this band ;
But Time did beckon to the flowers, and they
By noon most cunningly did steal away,
 And wither'd in my hand.

My hand was next to them, and then, my heart ;
I took without more thinking in good part
 Time's gentle admonition,
Which did so sweetly Death's sad taste convey,
Making my mind to smell my fatal day,
 Yet sugaring the suspicion.

Farewell, dear flowers ! sweetly your time ye spent,
Fit while ye lived for health and ornament,
 And after death for cures ;
I follow straight, without complaint or grief,
Since if my scent be good, I care not if
 It be as short as yours.

GEORGE HERBERT.



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CLARE ABBEY;

OR,

THE TRIALS OF YOUTH.

CHAPTER I.

Our feelings and our thoughts
Tend ever on, and rest not in the present.
As drops of rain fall into some dark well,
And from below comes a scarce audible sound;
So fall our thoughts into the dark hereafter,
And their mysterious echo reaches us.

THE SPANISH STUDENT.

“MAMMA! are you busy?” inquired a little boy, sliding down from his chair, and approaching his mother’s seat with a pencil in his hand.

Mrs. De Grey laid down her book. “Is that unfortunate point broken again?” she said, with a smile.

“Oh, no! mamma, it was not that; but if you are not busy, I want to speak to you. I have something *very* particular to say.”

The child was only six years old, but from his appearance you would have supposed him to be older. His dress, the open jacket and waistcoat (although the beautifully plaited frills of his falling collar bespoke a nurse's fanciful care), was the dress of a boy; his brown hair curled close round his head, and the fresh and blooming grace of his childhood was animated by an expression so resolute, so boyish, even so manly, that you would already have dignified his beauty with the manly epithet of handsome.

“What a little king!” was the hourly exclamation of his old nurse, as the child left the nursery, terrifying her by his jumps down the stairs; or when her keen glances caught sight of his youthful limbs perilously perched on the topmost boughs of the old fir trees that surrounded the house; and when you heard the exclamation you were inclined to agree with her.

Of Mrs. De Grey more will be said hereafter. Now, only let my readers picture her as one not young in years, and having in her appearance other marks than those of time alone.

Struck by the seriousness of his countenance, the mother drew her son towards her.

“What have you got to say, my dear boy?”

“I want to know, mamma, what trade I am to be?” He opened his large blue eyes, and fixed them upon her face with an expression of intense interest.

“That is rather a difficult question to answer, Ernest,” said his mother, smiling. “If I were to tell you what I think, I am afraid you would not understand me.”

“Oh! yes, I should, mamma. I understand those sort of things very well. *Do* tell me.”

“Well, then, Ernest, I don’t think it will be necessary that you should have any trade or profession, as it is called. You will have something else to do.”

"I thought everybody was something," he remarked, with a puzzled and disappointed air.

"What is your father, Ernest?"

The little boy pondered for some minutes.

"I don't know, mamma, now : but I suppose he *was* something when he was young."

"No ; never a soldier, nor a sailor, nor a lawyer, nor a clergyman. He was rich. He never had to work for his own living ; all that you see about here—this house, and the park, and the fields, and the trees, all belong to him,—and if you live, Ernest," she added, seriously, "I suppose some day they will belong to you."

"But what *shall* I do then, mamma, when I am a man? Shall I do nothing?"

"I should like you to try and think what ought to be the duty of those to whom God has given riches. There are only a few in the world who need not work for themselves. Perhaps you, my dear boy, will be one of those few. Now, tell me what you think those few should do?"

"I suppose, give away all they have got,"

the child replied ; but he spoke listlessly, and as if the subject did not much interest him.

“Not quite that, perhaps, Ernest,” she said, smiling, “but something of the kind. You will not be idle, I hope, though you may not need to work for your own living. Don’t you think you should like to work for others ?”

“Yes, mamma, in some ways very much,” —but he looked puzzled.

“We will talk these matters over another time ; run back to your drawing now, my boy. I don’t think you are quite old enough yet to understand me.”

The child obeyed, took up his pencil, and began to draw without making any further observation. He was engaged upon a battle-scene ; and, however strange in some respects the youthful composition might be, he certainly had contrived to give a vivid picture of the horrors and confusion of a field of battle. He now added a few more wounded men to his heaps of dead and dying, and mercilessly condemned them to

be trampled upon by gigantic horses, and officers, whose waving plumes were considerably higher than themselves.

These new features of horror occupied him for about ten minutes. He then again laid down his pencil, and gazed at his mother.

“Mamma, why do all the Leslie's have trades? Harry is going to be a sailor, and George is to be a clergyman, and Leopold, oh! mamma, do you know, he is going to be a soldier?”

“Mr. Leslie has a great many children, my dear Ernest. He means them all to work for their own living.”

“Then, mamma, I wish you had a great many children besides me. I wish” The little boy paused, for the names of many little brothers and sisters, whom his eyes had never seen, crowded upon his memory. He stopped, sorry and ashamed, and seizing his pencil, bent down his head, to conceal his crimson cheeks and starting tears.

His mother called him to her side, and kissed him with her tenderest smile.

“What have you got in your mind to-day, Ernest, that I am not to know?”

“Oh, mamma!” exclaimed the child, as if the words were bursting from his heart, “I do so wish to be a soldier. Do you think you ever will let me? I wish it so much, so very much.”

A cloud came over his mother’s pale brow, and she averted her eyes from his countenance. He was gazing up into her face, with such flashing eyes, such an ardent glance, as she remembered to have seen once, and but once before.

“No, Ernest,” she replied, at last, gently but firmly.

The little boy stood aghast at the decision of the reply. This question had for months,—it would scarcely be too much to say for years,—been agitating his childish heart with hope and fear, and had only been withheld in dread of the fatal “No,” which now had been spoken.

“*Never*, mamma?” he repeated, after gazing at her with open eyes and lips apart.

“No, Ernest, *never*. I am sure you would

not wish to make me unhappy ; and it would make me more unhappy than I can tell you now. You must not set your mind on being a soldier."

"Don't you wish me to be great and brave?" asked the child, with something of sadness in his voice.

"Yes, Ernest, I do indeed wish you to be brave ; but there are many ways of being brave, many ways of being a hero. It is very great and very good to be a brave soldier ; always think so, my dear boy : but do you know, there is something quite as great, and even better still?"

"What, mamma?" and he gazed eagerly at her.

"Fighting a harder fight than against a foreign enemy," she said, smiling ; "conquering our own wishes, our own will. Do you understand me, Ernest?"

"I don't know," the little boy answered, sadly.

"I think you may be something of a hero now," she continued, stooping and kissing his fair open brow, "if you try to give up

your first great wish, because I ask you to do so."

The child looked in her face for a moment without speaking; then returned to his seat, took up his drawing, walked steadily and resolutely to the fireplace, and tore his battle-scene into twenty pieces.

That same evening, as his old nurse sate at work in the outer nursery, she heard a sob from the adjoining room, where Ernest slept. She took up a candle, and pushing open the door, which was just ajar, stole softly to his bedside.

The little boy betrayed his wakefulness, by the violent movement with which he drew his sheet over his head, and completely buried himself beneath it.

"Mr. Ernest!" she called gently, again and again; but he remained silent.

She was not one, however, to be baffled; and, excited and troubled by the unwonted sound of weeping from Mr. Ernest, set herself very determinedly to discover "what the matter could be."

She put down her candle and entered

into conflict with the little vigorous fingers that pinned the sheet tightly round his head. It was a work of some difficulty, but experience conquered at last; and, although the child immediately concealed his face, his glowing and tear-stained cheek was not to be hidden from her scrutinizing gaze.

"Why, Mr. Ernest, what is the matter?" she cried.

"Go away, nurse," he said, peevishly, "I don't want you; I want to go to sleep."

"But, my dear, I must just settle your things, for you have got your sheet all of a ruck, and your hand is quite hot. Are you ill, my dear?"

"No, nurse, not a bit."

"Well, to be sure, something must be the matter. Are you hungry, my dear?"

"No, nurse, not a bit," more petulantly.

"Then, are you afraid, my dear? Shall I leave the door open?"

"No, nurse, not a bit," he cried, with vehemence and indignation.

The old woman had her own peculiar acuteness; she saw that if she pressed upon

this string, she should penetrate the mystery of his tears.

"I'd better leave the door open, I believe; many a one finds it lonesome to be in the dark. There, my dear, lay down your little head, and you shall see the glimmering of my candle upon the wall, to help you to go to sleep."

"I don't want your candle, nurse. I tell you I'm not afraid."

"Then, what is it, my king?" she said, coaxingly.

"I'm not such a coward as to be afraid," cried the little boy, vehemently. "I was thinking Oh, nurse! do you know, mamma says that I never, never am to be a soldier," and his voice died away in a low sob.

"Bless him!" remarked the old woman, partly in surprise, partly in affection.

Having conquered his first shame at having been found in tears, the little boy was ready enough to pour out his griefs. "Oh, nurse," he continued, "I have thought of it for such a long, long time, and now

it never can be. Mamma says it will make her unhappy, and she says I must bear it; and I thought I could bear it, but I can't, I can't indeed. Nurse, why should mamma be unhappy? wouldn't she like me to be a great, great soldier, like all the people she tells me about?"

"No, Mr. Ernest," replied the old woman shaking her head; "it would go very near to break your mamma's heart if you was to think of such a thing; and I will tell you a story about it to-morrow."

"Tell me now, nurse; do tell me now."

"Well then, my dear, you must promise to go to sleep as soon as ever I have done, and not to cry any more." And she sat down on a chair by his bedside.

"I will try to go to sleep as fast as ever I can, nurse, and I don't think I ever shall be such a baby as to cry again; now do nurse tell me a nice story." And the child fixed his bright wakeful eyes upon her face.

"Well, my dear, it is a great many years ago now; but I must tell you first, that when

your mamma was a little girl, she lived in a happy home with her papa and mamma, just as you do now, only that perhaps she was a bit happier, for she had a brother born the very same day that she was born ; such a beautiful merry boy as Mr. Henry was,—just such another as you, Mr. Ernest ; I often think I sees him come back again when I looks at you, my dear ; and they two was as fond of one another as turtle doves, as I heard a lady say. And they played about together all the day long, and at times Mr. Henry was as gentle as a young lady, and at times Miss Gertrude was clambering about like a little tom-boy. I was a girl then, I was the nursery-maid Mr. Ernest ; and I used to have such work with Miss Gertrude at times.” And she made a pitying sound as if she recalled the black hands and torn frocks of her former charge. “Well, my dear, your mamma’s papa was a great general ; they said he was the bravest man in all the king’s army, and he had been in I don’t know how many battles, and he was wounded . . . but my

dear, how red your cheeks are, and how your eyes do sparkle! I don't know what your mamma would say to me for telling these tales over-night. Better"

"Go on nurse," said the child, raising himself on his arms. "I won't go to sleep all night, if you stop; tell me about these battles."

"Well, well," said the old woman, nothing loth, "just for this onest Well, my dear, and so at last Miss Gertrude came to be a woman."

"But the battles, nurse, and the wounds?"

"We shall come to the battles, Mr. Ernest, if you be patient; and so, as I was saying, Miss Gertrude came to be a young lady. Sweet seventeen! oh! she was a rosebud—she was;—and Mr. Henry he was seventeen too, because they was both born on the very same day,—and Mr. Henry was like you, Mr. Ernest, and he had set his mind on being a soldier, ever since he was a child so high,—and the general, *he* thought there was nothing in all the world like the king's armies, and he was as ready to make a

soldier of Mr. Henry as Mr. Henry was himself; and his mamma too, she thought they was noble fellows them military. Only Miss Gertrude, the tear was in her sweet eye when the thing was settled; she could not a-bear to lose her brother; and I was a bit sad myself; but then he comed to see us in his grand dress, and he did look like a prince, with his fine feathers tossing in the air, and his sword that he swung about, and his bright blue eyes dancing like the very stars themselves, just as yours do now—lay down, my dear, lay down Well, it's no matter now; he went away and we never see'd him again. I dare say you knows about Boney, as we called him then; nobody thought of anything but Boney; and he was for taking to himself all the kingdoms of the earth as they said, and he was for making himself I don't know what beside; but it's no matter now, for he's dead and gone with all his greatness. Well, at that time there was great work in Spain, a country you knows about I dare say my dear; and the Dooke of

Wellington, he were n't a dooke then, he went off to the war, and Mr. Henry he went with him, and the general too, for all his wounds, he went off to the war. Oh! that was a day; I thought Miss Gertrude would have broken her heart; though young Mr. De Grey, your papa, my dear, he was coming a courting even then; but Mr. Henry he was full of fun and spirits to the last; bless his heart! only just at last, when he kissed Miss Gertrude, there was a tear shining in his bright eye; I see'd it myself, but he dashed it away and said he know'd he soon should see her again; and so he went off to the wars." The old woman stopped and wiped away a tear with the corner of her apron, and the little boy said nothing but gazed more earnestly into her face.

"Well, my dear," she began again, "the time went by and there came a day at last when there was a great victory; it was a bloody victory they said; and we heard there was a victory, and we heard that many was killed and many was wounded, and we feared and feared, and Miss

Gertrude, poor dear, she became as white as any pale white rose, and we did not know whether *they* was dead or alive; and then there came the firing for the victory. Oh! how well I remember that night; how the guns shouted in the air so triumphant like, and yet so sorrowful, for they was firing over a thousand of the dead. Poor Miss Gertrude sate so white and so trembling, and she held her poor mamma's hand, and she never shed a tear, though she knew, as she said afterwards, that they was firing over her brother's death; and so they was; we heard all after a bit. The General he was wounded, but *he* came back to us to die; but Mr. Henry he never comed again. They said, 'He had died as a young hero should die,' them was the words; 'and he sold his life dear, they said, for his country's sake;' and they said, 'Never was a young arm so strong, or a young heart so full of bravery,'—them was the words; and so Mr. Henry died."

She paused, and the little boy pulled the sheet over his face; but the next moment

he threw it back, and looking up, his eyes sparkling with tears, he said, "Oh! nurse, how I should like to die as Mr. Henry died."

"No, Mr. Ernest, my dear," she said, rising from her chair and beginning to arrange his disordered bed, "you must not die as Mr. Henry died; your mamma has never been herself since that day. Afore that she was as merry as a lark; bless you her voice sounded like a bird, as she sang about the house; but I never heard her sing since that day; and my belief is she could not abear such a grief again. No, Mr. Ernest, you must stay at home and make her happy; won't you, my dear?"

The child sighed—a real heavy sigh; "One battle, nurse, if I could have *one*."

"Well you must think of this, my dear, you or your mamma must give up your will—you must think which will be the best. But now, my dear, go to sleep as you promised me you would; there's ten o'clock I do declare."

"Yes, nurse" he said, turning obediently

on his side and closing his eyes—but as she was leaving the room he started up again, “Nurse, will you tell it me all again to-morrow?”

“Well, well, go to sleep, my dear—we will see when to-morrow comes. What a little king it is!” she murmured, as she took her place again before the large nursery work-basket.

CHAPTER II.

Blessings in boyhood's marvelling hour,
Bright dreams and fancyings strange ;
Blessings where Reason's awful power
Gave thought a bolder range.

LYRA APOSTOLICA.

Oh ! he is bright and jocund as the morn,
And there is not on earth that wilderness
Which he could not reclaim, and in its wastes
Detect the springs of fruitfulness and joy.

EDWIN THE FAIR.

THE wishes of childhood are rarely obliterated, for they are the expression of some strong feature in the character. I do not mean common wishes ; I do not mean such a common desire, as the fancy to be a soldier, which is expressed by most boys, and even by many girls, in the course of their early years ; but I mean wishes of a rarer and more determined kind ; such a

strong passionate wish as that which animated the youthful heart of Ernest De Grey.

Such wishes are rarely obliterated ; but they are often superseded by a new passion, and so it was in the case before us. The peculiar feature in his character which had prompted so intense a desire to be a soldier, remained unchanged within him ; but the desire itself with advancing years, with the awakening of new interests, was lulled to sleep. At sixteen his whole heart, his whole affections, his fancy and his imagination were centered on Clare Abbey, the abode of his forefathers, and his own future inheritance.

“ Il y a des lieux,” says La Bruyère, “ qu’on admire—il y en a d’autres qui touchent, et où l’on aimeroit à vivre.” Clare Abbey was of the latter class. It was very pretty, but in describing the great features of its beauty, you would seem to be describing a thousand other places which ornament the face of the country in England. There was the broad clear stream, the verdant meadows, the luxuriant woods, the fine spreading

trees, the sloping hills, which the inhabitants of the district dignified with the name of mountains, but which had no claim to the name; all these beauties it had, and yet with all these it might only have been a fine place, and, as I think is the case with many fine places, would have had little power to "*toucher le cœur*." Clare Abbey had however its own individuality, and it was in the small touches which gave it its distinctive character that the attraction lay; it had many features of a fine place, but no admirer on record had ever been known to compliment it with such an epithet. I must endeavour to describe it, that the scenes of this tale may have a local habitation and a name.

The Abbey stood on a flat piece of ground which formed a terrace, beneath a wooded hill which protected it from the north, and with about a quarter of a mile of gently sloping meadow above the river. On one side it was approached by a long avenue of elm trees; on the other side was a low copse wood, interspersed here and there with oak

trees and firs of larger growth ; and through this wood, which formed a kind of pleasure ground, many wandering ways had been cut, which led with more or less directness to the pretty village of Cranleigh. On the south front the windows opened on a broad gravel walk with a lawn beyond ; beyond the lawn was another gravel walk, and a flower garden stood on each side ; the upper part of the lawn was ornamented with a variety of dark shrubs of low growth, and beyond the further walk, on the verge from whence the meadow began to slope, tall cypresses and stiff-looking pines planted at regular distances, and forming vistas into the park, stood like sentinels, as if to guard the precincts of the dwelling from intrusion.

The architecture of the Abbey was irregular, and perhaps, strictly considered, was liable to many objections. A part of it was very old,—long, low, and ecclesiastical-looking, with cloistral passages, jutting buttresses, and chapel-like windows. Additions had been made from time to time, both in old and modern days, and sometimes in

some defiance of the laws of architecture ; yet upon the whole, notwithstanding some strange blending of styles and periods, a certain order and proportion in all the additions had been observed, which delighted the eye ; and you felt as you often feel with the human countenance, that it was beautiful, although by right and rule it had no business to be so. All in, and around, and about the house had the same attraction. There was nothing regular : everything had a distinctive character, not amounting to eccentricity, but possessing a mixture of wildness and quaintness, formality and grace, which came home to your heart, and took a place in your imagination. The ground fell, sloped, or broke, where you least expected it, and yet you could not but say that it was well done ; the stream curved, now gracefully, now with a sharp and angular turning, which astonished and yet delighted you. The trees grew as trees should not grow, losing their leaders, hanging and drooping in quaint and picturesque attitudes ; and the mazy pleasure-grounds, although they had

been laid out with art and care, appeared but to wander at their own sweet will, and that will, however sweet, a very wayward and capricious one. Altogether, though it was not to all minds equally attractive, Clare Abbey had the peculiar gift of taking hold upon the fancy, and becoming, consciously or unconsciously, the haunt of the airy castles and fantastic creations of those who even once beheld it.

To Ernest De Grey it was at once the home and resort of his every day fancy, and the ideal of his imaginative perfection.

At one of the drawing-room windows opening to the ground, on a soft summer evening early in August, ten years after the date of the last chapter, the youthful heir of this fondly-cherished abode sate with his mother alone. The lapse of years, and of those years which seem like eternity to youth, had made but little change in him. The handsome child had grown into a tall and handsome youth ; but in his smile and in his eye you read that he was still a boy. In his whole air and manner there was a

fresh and boyish grace, which I regret to think is now but seldom seen at the mature and advanced age of sixteen. In some respects he was even more boyish at sixteen than he had been at six; for as his added years left him more free and unrestrained, the natural bent of his mind towards sport and action had developed itself, the exercises of the body usurping a greater share of his favours than the exercises of the intellect. His character, however, will, I hope, be sufficiently gathered in all its points and variations from the record of the following conversation; and trusting to this hope, description shall be spared.

“You are very thoughtful to-night, Ernest,” said Mrs. De Grey, breaking at last a long and, when Ernest was present, a rather unusual silence.

“Yes, mother, I *was* thinking,” he replied, raising himself in the chair on which he was comfortably reclining.

“And may I ask the subject of these serious meditations?” she rejoined, smiling.

“Why, yes, mother, you are to know some

of my thoughts; but I was thinking of so many things, that I hardly know what to begin upon. Do you remember Mr. Markham, mother, how angry he used to be because I said I could think of twenty things at once? I remember his telling me at last, that I was very insolent to set up my opinion against that of the wisest philosophers, who had pronounced it to be impossible. But, notwithstanding Mr. Markham and his friends, my opinion has remained unchanged. I don't know what philosophers can do; but *I* can think of twenty things at once—twenty at least—and so I have been doing to-night."

"I am afraid, Ernest," said his mother, with a smile, "these variegated thoughts are not very wise ones."

"They are good, I think, some of them. Some I hope, some I am sure, will please you. They are plans, mother,—plans of things I want to do. I plan till I am quite mad. I will tell you one, now, which I think you will like: it is about the old church. It is so pretty, it is a pity to leave it as it is. I want so much to repair and improve it."

“ Really, my dear Ernest, have you thought of that ? ” his mother said, with some surprise ; for the sportive and pleasure-loving boy was little given to schemes of a serious or a useful kind.

“ I can’t say that it is quite my own idea, mother : it was put into my head ; but, having been put in, I get very mad about it. You know that Lady Frances Leicester, who is so good-natured to me and the other boys at Overton ? Well, she has new done the church there : it is quite beautiful now. And one day, while I was admiring it, she asked me about our church ; and when I described it, she laughed excessively at the high pulpit and our great pew, and said what a shame it was, and drew me a sketch of how it should be. It might be the prettiest church in England, mother, that I am sure of ; and I never shall rest till it is so. I meant to have asked my father to do it when I came home this time ; but he has been looking so grave, and you too, mother, that I thought perhaps I had better not.”

“ You are right, Ernest ; you had better

not," his mother replied, a shade passing over her face, which always was a sad one. "Your father is worried about money just now, and he could not attend to you. But, my dear boy, your wish makes me very happy, and I hope you *will* dream of it. Young as you are, you might already begin to think of accomplishing it."

"Not very soon, mother," he said, laughing. "Lady Frances said one or two thousand would be necessary. I should not care to do it badly. However, we must wait for that, and many other things. Oh! mother, don't you wish my education was over."

She shook her head with a smile.

"Why, mother, then I could always live here, and always be with you; don't you care for that?"

"I am afraid, Ernest, I think you want a little education; and, besides, I am too old to wish away years as you do."

"I don't wish them away," he said, eagerly. "I have got enough to do for years and years to come. I only want the time to come when I may use the years. This education takes

me up entirely. I will just count over some of the things I want to do here. There is the church, and then there is a tennis-court”

Mrs. De Grey again shook her head.

“You mean that is very expensive too. Well, but, mother, I thought we were rich. However, never mind; only let me tell you my wants. I am so very fond of tennis: Lady Frances lets us play in her court at Overton, and sometimes I feel as if I could not live without it. Then I wish to have a pack of hounds. My father said something about it five years ago, and I have been watching, and waiting, and expecting to hear more; but he has never mentioned it again to me. Does he ever speak about it to you, mother?”

“No, Ernest, never,” she said gravely.

“I hope he will. I should like to hunt, and look after hounds Well, and then a very good cricket-ground; and then, mother, there are some of *our* plans, yours and mine, the cuttings, and the new drives; and then, besides all that, I want to do a great

deal of good. I have no end of plans about the poor people. Lady Frances talks to me whenever I go to Overton, and shows me *her* plans, because she says I have a good head for such things—and I think I have.”

Mrs. De Grey said nothing in reply to this enumeration of his wants; but he read in her countenance a mother’s interest in all his plans and desires; and, to say the truth, it was no unusual thing for Ernest to bear the principal share in their confidential conversations.

He paused for a moment, then continued :
“ And now, mother, about my plans.”

“ Your plans, Ernest ! ” she said, laughing.
“ Why, have you more of them ? ”

“ Oh yes ! I have only been telling you my vague dreams, for I dream about Clare Abbey day and night : my plans are more formed, and are very important. They must begin with a question. My dear mother,”—he spoke in an anxious, and rather an insinuating voice,—“ can you tell me—am I to go back to old Crackinthorpe’s ? ”

“ Your father has not quite made up his

mind. *I* wish you to go for another year before you go to Oxford. What do you think yourself? I meant to talk to you about it some day."

"I had *much* rather not," he replied decidedly.

"Why, Ernest?"

"Why, mother," he said, again raising himself eagerly in his chair, "the fact is, I am not made for what is called a sedentary life. At Mr. Crackinthorpe's we read from morning till night, and I am getting tired of it."

"I thought you were fond of reading, Ernest. I am sorry to hear you speak as you do."

"I am fond of reading in a certain way; but then it must be my way, and not Mr. Crackinthorpe's. Percy and Lovel call me a book-worm sometimes, because I like to read Shakspeare, and Hollingshed, and Plutarch's Lives on a rainy day. I do like that sort of reading very much; but I don't care for what old Crackinthorpe likes. I don't like Greek and Latin; and as to mathematics,

if I go on with them, I know, mother, the end will be that you will have to visit me in Bedlam. And, after all, as I am not to belong to any learned profession, what is the use of it? Really, mother, I had much better do something more improving, and not bore myself with things I hate any longer."

"Do you think you never are to do anything you dislike, Ernest?" his mother asked, rather gravely.

The boy coloured. "Not *never*, mother; and I don't object to doing what I dislike, when there is any use in it; but when there is no particular use"

"And are you the best person to decide what is useful or not?" she continued seriously, though she smiled. "You must not suppose, Ernest, that I don't understand what you mean. When I was young, I felt and argued just as you do. I remember when I was first made to learn German, that I hated it; and because I hated it, I thought it was useless to take any trouble about it. I told my governess that, when once she was gone, I never would look at it again; but, notwith-

standing all my entreaties, she insisted upon my going on; and I found afterwards that her reason for making such a point of it was *because* I hated it. I was rather a spoiled child; and she saw that it would be good for me to overcome my own feelings, at her desire, without regard to the usefulness of the study. And she was right. My dislike to the language has always continued, and I have looked at it but little since she went away. But I feel, in other ways, that the hard study at the German I hated has been more useful to me than almost any other part of my education. Do you see the application to yourself, Ernest?"

"Am *I* a spoiled child, mother?"

"Not *quite* spoiled, I hope," she replied fondly, as she met the glance of his clear bright eyes; "but you are a little too much accustomed to have your own way, and to think that all your wishes must be gratified;—rather fond of your own will and pleasure. Is it not so?" And she looked smilingly in his face.

"Perhaps," he said, thoughtfully.

“Then, my dear boy, you will not, I hope, be surprised if, notwithstanding your strong wish, I still think it better for you to go to Mr. Crackinthorpe’s again.”

Ernest made no answer : he was meditating. When he spoke, it was with something of timidity and anxiety.

“I am afraid, mother, you will think I am only anxious for my *pleasure*, if I tell you my plan, my chief plan of all—the one I have been coming to all this time. But, indeed, if I can judge about myself at all, I don’t think I speak only for my pleasure. I don’t wish to be idle ; I really wish to improve myself—I wish to be useful when I am a man ; and, after a great deal of consideration, I think that, under my plan, I should learn a great deal more than if I went on in the regular way.”

He stopped, and looked at his mother. She smiled, but rather anxiously.

“Don’t be afraid of speaking, Ernest ; you know I shall not be afraid of telling you what I think.”

“Well, mother, then the fact is, I don’t

want to go to Oxford : I want to travel instead. You see," he continued, speaking very fast, to prevent a remonstrance until all his arguments had been laid before his mother, "I don't think I learn very much from studying. *Perhaps* it is my fault ; but I think it is the fault of my nature. I always find that from anything I see or hear, I learn twice as much as I do by reading. When I *see* anything curious or striking, it sets me thinking, and I find that I very seldom forget what I have once seen and thought about ; but with reading it is different—nothing makes much impression. I was reading about a man the other day, who seemed just like me. His biographer said that he could be taught nothing, he was obliged to learn everything by observation and experience ; and so you see, mother, that if I were to travel, and to observe and take pains while I was travelling, I should learn a great deal more than if I went to Oxford, where I should only see one set of things and people. Do you see what I mean, mother?—do you like

what I say?" And he bent forward to look at her with eager sparkling eyes.

"I am afraid, Ernest," she said, rather sadly, "that your old soldier fancy is stirring again. You will not be satisfied without some great excitement."

"No, mother, no, no, no," he repeated, vehemently, "I don't want to be a soldier : I should hate to be a soldier. I wish education and all the bother of it was over, that I might come and settle here for good ; for I care for nothing but Clare Abbey in all the world. I only wish, as this education must take place, to get over it the best way I can, and to learn as much as I can while it is going on. So, my dear mother"

The conversation was interrupted by a loud ring at the door-bell.

CHAPTER III.

Droop not, but nobly struggle still,
For others look to thee ;
And they would cease to strive with ill,
If thou shouldst conquer'd be.

GEORGIANA BENNET.

MRS. DE GREY'S life had been a life of trial—trial, not so much startling and outward, as inward and oppressive.

She had married early, and in her marriage all who loved her had supposed her happiness to be insured. The husband of her choice had every advantage of appearance, station, and mental qualification which the most fastidious could desire; and the second home to which her destiny brought her, was sufficiently attractive to win (what is rather hard to be won) that tenderness of interest and regard, the especial property of the home of our childhood alone. But,

though all was outwardly smiling, clouds were even in early days hanging over the young wife's lot. Her husband's temper was bad — not passionate, not jealous, but bad. He could not bear thwarting; small trials depressed, small vexations soured him. His spirits were restless and uncertain; he needed amusement and excitement, not from weakness or deficiency of mind, but simply to prevent him from brooding over petty contradictions.

Mrs. De Grey's education had little fitted her for the duties which such a temper required. A sunny-minded active wife might have brought sunshine to her husband's mind; but she had been a spoiled child, one ever petted, ever considered,—the chosen and constant companion of a twin-brother, whose sweet, cloudless disposition, had been unruffled by a single care. She loved her husband; but the very strength of her love made her sink and tremble beneath his gloom. Saddened by her brother's loss, her own spirits required cheering. During the early days of courtship they *had* been

cheered by a devoted lover. She was not prepared for the new duties required of her : she failed in performing them. Then trials came. Mr. De Grey wished with more than ordinary anxiety for a son. Three daughters appeared in succession ; but almost before their father had banished the frown that greeted their birth, the mother wept over their loss. Two sons followed, welcomed with love from both their parents, received with rejoicing, almost with triumph ; and they too pined and died one after the other, and the house remained desolate. The father was embittered by trial, the mother crushed. Over the married life, which had dawned so happily, appeared to be settling a hopeless gloom.

But pure and beautiful natures, although for a time they may abandon themselves to an excess of grief, cannot for ever close their eyes to those duties which are laid alike upon the happy and the afflicted. She awoke at length to the sinfulness and rebelliousness of the despondency to which she had yielded herself ; and before the birth of

Ernest, her youngest child, flinging off the weight that oppressed her, she set herself seriously to consider the responsibilities of her life. Unhappily, evil is hard to undo : the mind of her husband appeared to be hopelessly embittered. The birth of Ernest, and the interest of his young life, which brought thoughts of gratitude, and peace, and reviving to her, were ineffectual in cheering him. He loved his son, cared for his son, toiled even too much for the future prosperity of his son ; but, except at rare intervals, he remained, as by the habit of years he had become, morose, and hard to please. Of late, sadder and darker fears for his peace and welfare had oppressed her. Bitten, in common with many of his countrymen, by the spirit of speculation, he had thrown himself headlong, as was his nature, into the excitement of money-getting ; and a short time of restless and excited cheerfulness had been followed by weeks of deeper gloom, and more incurable despondency. Never again, however, after her first awakening, did Mrs. De Grey yield herself to

melancholy. The time was past when she could summon elastic gaiety to her aid—mirth and gaiety will not come at our call; but patience, serenity, tranquillity, soft words and loving smiles—these, which are in our power, by slow degrees she had made her own, and these she never failed to give.

A few words describe the trials of years; but deep and ineffaceable are the traces which those years, so easily described, leave as they pass. Though not yet fifty, Mrs. De Grey looked like an old woman. She had been very lovely in her youth: she was beautiful still, but it was the beauty of age. Her cheek was blanched and faded, her hair white as the purest silver, her figure slightly bent, and even in the peace and serenity which her countenance had now attained, you felt that it was the hush and repose which comes after, not before, a storm. There are some beautiful words of Mackenzie's, which present a perfect picture of the mother of the hero of my tale.

“She kept her sorrows, like the devotions that solaced them, sacred to herself. They

threw nothing of gloom over her deportment—a gentle shade only—like the fleckered clouds of summer, that increase, not diminish, the benignity of the season.”

A loud knock or ring is an event which even the most accustomed ears do not hear with indifference. Even if repeated twenty times a day, to some speculation, pleasing or unpleasing, it gives rise; and, coming unexpectedly, it is sufficient to cause an answering vibration in the strongest nerves, and in the most unexcitable heart.

Mr. De Grey had been absent for some days from home, and was expected to be absent for some days longer. This notice, therefore, of an arrival was an unexpected one; and though some people are in the habit of coming and going without exciting much of hope or fear, or any disturbing sensation, *he* was not one of these. Mrs. De Grey, whose nerves were weak, started and trembled, and her pale check became paler. Ernest, little inclined to fear, or to think that there was any cause for fear in this

world, was yet swift to read his mother's anxious countenance. He quickly left the room, and as quickly returned again.

"It's my father's carriage," he said; "but my father is not come yet. Foster says he got out at the top of the hill, and said he would walk home." After a moment he continued: "Shall I go and meet him? or will you come too, mother? It is such a beautiful evening."

"Perhaps we had better not," she said, gently. "He has had some harassing business in London; and you know he likes a quiet walk alone. But you shall go and order some dinner to be ready, and ring the bell for candles. We have been talking so long, that it is quite dark."

When the candles were brought, and Ernest sate down opposite to his mother, he was struck by the unusual sadness and paleness of her countenance.

"Is anything the matter, mother?" he asked. "You do look so ill. Do you really mean that that stupid bell frightened you?"

She smiled at his inquiries; but the expression of disturbance remained the same, or rather increased, during the long hour that passed before her husband appeared.

He came at length; and then, if there was any secret cause for anxiety, his countenance did not tend to set it at rest. One rapid searching glance his wife directed to him, and withdrew her eyes; but in that glance she fancied that his stern features were sterner, his form more bent, his hair whiter, and his whole appearance more aged, than when she had parted from him a short week before.

He scarcely appeared to notice their presence, returned no answer to their affectionate greeting; but turning gloomily to the empty fireplace, placed himself before it, and, with a muttered complaint, exclaimed against the cold.

“Cold, father!” Ernest exclaimed in astonishment, for the day was intensely hot; “do you really feel cold—shall I light the fire?”

“I usually mean what I say,” he replied

sullenly.—“Do light it, Ernest,” said his mother, “and shut the window.”

The fire burnt as fires perversely delight to burn on a hot summer’s day : the wood blazed and crackled, the coals kindled, the room became like a furnace.

“It is hot enough now,” remarked poor Ernest, his cheeks more than rivalling the fire in their brilliant glow.

“Hot ! what else should it be with such a fire as this ?—there is no bearing the room.” And Mr. De Grey, with an impatient movement, rolled back his chair.

A warning glance, grave and entreating, withheld the answer that was bursting from Ernest’s lips ; but though he could restrain himself where he only was concerned, he could not patiently endure the contemptuous remarks and bitter replies with which his mother’s anxious inquiries, and soothing endeavours, were received. Gloom, depression, and peevishness were no unusual symptoms in his father’s temper ; but the mood of this night *was* uncommon ;—contemptuous replies to his mother, in his presence

at least, were unusual, and he could not bear them. Finding the rising wrath of a hot though sweet temper difficult to subdue, he suddenly left his seat, snatched up a book, and retreated to pass the evening in his own room.

The door had scarcely closed when Mr. De Grey rose, stood before his wife, and the volcano burst forth. Its fire was directed against himself, not against her. The temper which he had inflicted upon her and on his child was but the expression of the despairing misery that filled his heart,—was but the smothered rage which inwardly was lavished on himself. He began to speak, and now with passionate remorse, now with bitter despair, he told her the tale of his utter, hopeless, irretrievable ruin.

As the affairs of this night are important only so far as Ernest is concerned, I will not dwell upon the scene, but shortly state the particulars of the case.

Mr. De Grey had originally engaged in speculation for amusement—to occupy his

restless nature—nominally to replace a sum lost by the failure of a banking-house in London. Then the fever of gain—that blinding, maddening fever—had taken possession of him. He went on and on: successfully at first,—then fortune changed, but the fever remained. He lost and won, lost and won, and *lost*. He awoke and found himself a ruined man; and in this ruin not himself alone, but Ernest was involved. From circumstances connected with the property—the estates had not been placed in settlement, and all was lost: Clare Abbey, the possession of his forefathers, and the beloved home of his youth, must be given up into the hands of strangers.

This was the sum and substance of the startling announcement which fell on the ears of the loving wife and doting mother. As my readers will have perceived, she was prepared for some blow: she had seen the gradual growth of the new passion, the “haste to be rich,” in the mind of her

husband; and, without pain, she had seen of late that his speculations were failing to answer his sanguine anticipations: she was prepared to hear of a great loss,—of the necessity of a change of life; she had even contemplated the probability of being driven from their home and their country, of living for a time in poverty that Ernest should never suffer; but *his* share in the trial had never even suggested itself to her imagination, and the announcement came with the startling violence of a thunder clap. It was the uprooting the treasured hopes and dreams of years.

She did not fail however—as what loving wife could fail!—to meet the trial as it should be met. She was not naturally what is called a strong-minded woman; but she had acquired strength in the experience of her life, and this kind of strength, mingling as it does the softness of feeling with the calm of self-control, is of all tempers the one best fitted to deal with misfortune, and to heal the pangs of remorse. Soft words turn away wrath, and many other are the

hidden powers and virtues they possess,—
disarming misery of its sting, often changing
evil into good. From the soft words that
night spoken, blessings un hoped for and
unexpected came ; for through their influ-
ence a tie of trust and confidence was
cemented between those whom the joys
and trials of life had hitherto failed to unite.

CHAPTER IV.

I pray not, dearest, thou mayst be
For ever as I see thee now,
Unruffled as the summer sea
Without a care to cloud thy brow;
I know that thou wert sent to share
Life's mingled cup of good and ill;
Child of a Holy Father's care,
Submit thee to His Sovereign will.

SEWELL'S SACRED THOUGHTS.

IDEAS on education are so various, that the system pursued by Mrs. De Grey in the education of her child would probably have been liable to objections of opposite kinds. Some, because of the high principles, religious and moral, which she instilled, would have called it strict; but the larger number perhaps in the present day, seeing her attention to his wants and wishes,—her earnest care to encircle his young life with an atmosphere of happiness, would have pronounced it to be over-indulgent.

There is no doubt that, provided the great principles of reverence, obedience, and self-denial are properly instilled, the early years of a child can hardly, for its future good, be too happy;—the strictness that brings discomfort and unhappiness in its train is a false and perilous strictness; nevertheless there might have been some truth in the accusation of over-indulgence. Content with feeding his mind with high and noble thoughts, the mother may have been less careful to bring those thoughts into action. Satisfied with acting steadily for his good in great points, she may in those lesser things which far more than great ones form the character, have been too desirous to gratify his wishes, to guard him from disappointment, to make the earth he trod a flowery way, and the sky above his head a cloudless one. Such at least was the reproach that conscience made when the time drew near to speak,—to speak those words which would blight his sunny, sanguine dreams for ever.

Mrs. De Grey had delayed the disclosure

till the last moment : she shrank from it. None knew as she did how great the trial to her son would be ; for it was she herself who had twined the thoughts of his home with his very heartstrings. Shrinking, with something perhaps of weakness, from his first wish, so warmly and passionately expressed, she had woven the idea of his home into all the plans for his education,—into all his visions of the future,—she had made it at once the motive for exertion and its reward : Clare Abbey had become—and it was she herself who had made it so—the idol of her son's heart.

Something to blame, no doubt, there was in this, but it was rather an excess of a right principle than the enforcement of a wrong one. In such strong early local attachments there is so much of good,—such concentrated affections are so powerful as weapons in a future warfare with evil,—that praise and blame might almost equally be distributed ;—we might almost say, that even in its excess the failing leans to virtue's side.

Again the mother and son sat alone, to-

wards the close of an August day. It was three weeks since the evening of the fatal announcement, and those three weeks of glorious summer weather had been passed by Ernest in a state of intense enjoyment. To his numerous active sports and pleasures he had lately added a love of boating; and as day after day he returned from his excursions on the water, with companions gay and eager as himself, his mother had averted her eyes from his sunburnt cheek and dazzling smile, and to the promptings of her inward monitor had still replied, "Not to-day! let me spare him yet; the time will come all too soon." The time, however, at length had come, and could no more be delayed. Mr. De Grey was gone to London to complete his arrangements for the sale of his property, and before his return the dis-closure was to be made.

Ernest had been at home all day; his young companions, the Leslies, younger in years, though not in nature, than himself, had returned to school. Fulfilling, at length, of his own will, an often postponed promise,

he had been engaged for many hours of the afternoon in making a catalogue of some curious old prints for his mother, and had devoted himself to his task with unusual quietness and diligence.

"There, mother!" he exclaimed at last, closing a large portfolio which lay before him, laying down his pen, and stretching out his arms, with a slight sigh of weariness—"There, it is done at last! and I hope, for once, you will tell me that I have really been industrious."

"You really have," she replied with a smile. After a moment she continued affectionately, but gravely—"I hardly expected you to persevere in such a long and tiresome task, and I have been watching you with pleasure. Patience and industry may be necessary even for you, Ernest."

"You always speak like that, mother," he said, colouring slightly, for his conscience took her praise rather in the light of a reproof: "I know you think I care for nothing but my own pleasure, and perhaps you are right. Ever since our conversation the other

night I have been thinking of what you said, and trying to find out if it was true; and I am afraid it is true rather but I don't mean it to be true. I hate selfishness." He sat for a moment thoughtful, then laughed as he spoke—"Didn't some old heathen say something about knowing oneself being a great object? if so, I have made a great attainment these last few weeks. I always used to think I was a hero, something very superior indeed, — made to sacrifice myself, and to delight in it, and now" — he paused.

"And now what?" and his mother watched him with a smile, but an anxious one.

"And now, mother, I am afraid that I should prefer doing what I please to any sacrifice whatever."

"You do not, I hope, look upon yourself as *incapable* of a sacrifice?" she asked, with a gravity that made him dwell upon the subject.

"No," he said, after some consideration; "I don't think I should mind one great

sacrifice,—even if it were a very great one. I think, on the contrary, I should rather like the excitement of it: but what I mean that I have discovered is this,—I never thought before that I was very fond of having my own way, and my own wishes gratified, but after thinking of it, I am afraid I am. I am afraid I never could bear to go through a long course of sacrifices. I am afraid, I think, that always to do what one disliked, as some people do, would be very hard.”

Mrs. De Grey took a book from the table, and opening it, read aloud the following sentence :

“I have no doubt that happiness is to be found rather in renouncing one’s own will, than in gratifying it. Looking back from the eminence of a long life on the valley through which I have passed, I have no hesitation in saying, that those spots which now shine the brightest, are not those which were illuminated by enjoyment; but rather those which were hallowed by sacrifice.”

“Well, mother, I can understand that to a degree,” Ernest said, after listening to her

with attention. "I dare say when one looks *back* one had rather think of what one has given up, than of what one has merely enjoyed; but looking *forward* is quite another thing. Giving up in *expectation* one's hopes and wishes is a melancholy thought; don't you think so, mother?"

She was bending over her work,—she did not appear to hear him.

"I am afraid, mother," he said, looking at her with some earnestness, "you expect me to wish to be disappointed. I can't do that."

"No, indeed, my dear boy; I have heard some people express a wish for trial, and I have always considered such a wish both unwise and presumptuous; but if trial came, dear Ernest, I hope you would not shrink from it."

"I hope not," he said, thoughtfully, struck by something unusual in his mother's manner; but the cloud of momentary gravity, was not of long duration. A few minutes afterwards he walked towards the window, and leaning out of it, continued playfully,

“I think that gentleman, mother, must have been rather melancholy in his mind, for I disagree with him about looking back. I think there is something very bright about a place where one has once been happy—merely simply happy without doing any good to anybody. Now those bushes, mother,” pointing to a large clump of under-wood on one side of the lawn, “you will laugh at me, I dare say, but I never go by them without a particular feeling of happiness; and that comes from a remembrance of the house that Harry Leslie and I built there a hundred years ago now; and just in the same way Clare Abbey will always look bright. I fancy that when I am a horridly old man, I shall still feel happy while I can creep about it, and think of all I did in . . . my dear mother, in my *happy* youth,” and he came suddenly towards her and put his arm round her neck.

She rose up hastily from her seat, and gently repulsed his embrace; she could not bear it at that moment.

“Will you walk with me this evening,

Ernest?" she asked with a gravity and meaning in her manner which he could not understand.

"Yes, mother; I should like it very much;" but while he spoke he was examining her countenance.

Mrs. De Grey was quickly ready, and they set off together. Her health, though good, was not strong, and Ernest's arm was the common support of her languid footsteps when she made any unusual exertion. Now, without expressing any definite purpose, she insensibly guided him up the ascent, to the brow of the hill, from whence the finest view of Clare Abbey was to be obtained. In sight of all its beauty she wished him to give it up.

They walked along in silence. There are ways and means independent of any outward sign or expression by which those between whom there is a strong bond of sympathy communicate their impressions to each other. Such a power was used now by Mrs. De Grey. She said no more; her countenance was serious, but no more: all

around was calm and quiet, as it was wont to be; and yet Ernest, as they pursued their silent way, plunged in deep though unconscious reflection, felt as if he stood on the brink of some extraordinary event.

They reached the brow of the hill, and there Mrs. De Grey paused and turned to gaze. The sun was setting, and such streams of rose-coloured light were falling from the sky and bathing the woods and waters, that a landscape poor in natural advantages would have been transformed into a fairy land. Its effect on the peculiar and romantic scenery around and about the Abbey, is easier for the fancy to imagine than the pen to picture.

Mrs. De Grey turned, however, from the landscape to gaze on the living beauty of her son's countenance, glowing and sparkling with admiration and pride.

"You are very fond of Clare Abbey; Ernest?" she said, with a grave inquiring sadness.

"My dear mother, do you doubt it?" he said, reproachfully; "why do you look at

me so strangely? You cannot misunderstand me, surely? you cannot suppose that because I said the other day I wished to travel, I care for travelling or anything else in the world compared to being at home, here, at Clare Abbey with you? You must have misunderstood me most strangely!"

"No, I did not doubt it; I know very well what you feel; but in my weakness, Ernest, I postpone the tale of tidings heavy to your ear. I have something to tell you, my dearest boy; you may have discovered that I have spoken much of the necessity of sacrifice; it was to prepare you to make one. I must ask you now, are you capable of a great sacrifice—a sacrifice of that which is very dear to you! can you give up all the hopes and dreams you have pictured for your future life, and not murmur?"

He looked at her in vacant astonishment.

"I am speaking the truth, dear Ernest; you will have indeed much to give up! Your father has lost all—nothing remains for him or for you. This place, Clare Abbey,

must be given up into the hands of strangers."

"But how, mother?" he asked, wonderingly, too much amazed to realize or to feel.

"You shall know all in time, Ernest. There has been error—I do not shrink from telling you so—error on your father's part, and through error this misfortune comes; but it is not for us, for you or for me to blame: your own heart will tell you that, dear Ernest. I would rather have you feel that though human conduct and human error may be the cause, it is not less the hand of God that sends the trial and asks from you submission."

He stood by her side in silence, his eyes fixed upon the ground. His thoughts were not of his father's error, nor his own submission; but flitting before him there came the past joys of his childhood, the present joys of his youth, the pictured joys of his future days, all centered and treasured in that one spot before him; and vaguely fell the words that it must be given up. Ernest was right; he was *not* a hero.

“ Will you not speak, Ernest?” his mother asked, gently; “ will you not tell me how you will bear the change?”

He gave a rapid glance around, then said hurriedly, “ If you can bear it, mother, surely I can!” But in his heart he felt as if the glory of life was ebbing from the spot where he stood.

She said no more, neither in exhortation nor in sympathy. She saw that even *she* had scarcely estimated the weight of the blow that had fallen; but there is a time for all things, and it seemed to her then to be a time not to speak, but to keep silence. She left him to his own thoughts.

“ Shall we go home, Ernest?” she said at last; “ it is getting dark.”

“ So it is,” he replied, looking around him,—with a half smile adding, “ how changed it is since we came up here.”

They retraced their steps, and walked in silence till they approached the house. As they were entering it Ernest said,

“ I will talk to you to-morrow, mother. I am afraid I have disappointed you; you

expected me to speak more nobly, more bravely, but I am not quite sure yet what I do feel. It is very easy to speak, but I should be sorry to speak well now, and to fail afterwards. I must think. I can only say, mother, that I hope you will never have reason to be ashamed of me."

And without saying or waiting to hear more, he left her; appeared at dinner with a smiling countenance, and talked cheerfully on other subjects during the whole evening.

CHAPTER V.

He that is born is listed. Life is war.

YOUNG'S NIGHT THOUGHTS.

CLARE ABBEY was sold, and sold well ; which was a satisfaction to Mr. De Grey's creditors, though it was of no advantage to him. It was bidden for and eagerly purchased by a gentleman of large property in the county, whose house was inadequate to the size of his estates, and who had often contemplated the antique beauty of the house, grounds, and park of Clare Abbey (speaking as they did of an ancient family and a far descent), with the eyes of hopeless envy. The sale was a private one ; the house was not dismantled ; pictures, books, furniture, with few exceptions, everything was sold. Mr. De Grey, with his family and household, departed in the month of

September, and in the month of October his successor, with his family and household, took possession of the Abbey. There was little noise or conversation on the subject. The change was so quietly made, that few remembered how, in that change, the hopes of a young life were shattered, and a young man's buoyant heart was saddened for ever.

"Oh, mamma! what a pretty, pretty place!" said a lovely little girl of about six years old, springing up in the barouche, which was conveying the new family to their new abode.

"So it is, Camilla;" and Lady Vere, for the first time indolently raised her veil and looked around her. "What a fine avenue! I wonder how many trees there are. I dare say there are fifty."

"Fifty! my lady," said the nurse, "there must be three hundred at the very least."

"Dear, you don't say so?" and Lady Vere opened her beautiful eyes. "What a quantity!"

"Oh, Reginald! isn't it pretty?" said the

little girl, springing up again, as they came in sight of the house. "What a nice garden, and what nice grass, and what nice bushes! Oh, Reginald! a'n't you glad that we are coming to live here?"

"You always like everything new, Camilla," said the boy, coldly; and there was a cloud on his brow.

"Sit still, Camilla; you rumple all my silk," remarked her mother.

The carriage stopped. Camilla was lifted from the carriage, and the brother followed her.

"Oh, Reginald, pigeons!" she screamed; and, seizing her brother's hand, she scampered off into the stables, from whence she had observed the top of a pigeon-house. He stood by her side in silence, neither joining in, nor noticing, the screams of delight with which she watched and endeavoured to seize the pigeons that were picking up the grain around her.

"Miss St. Maur! Miss St. Maur! come back directly;" called the fat nurse, waddling towards the place where they stood.

"Your mamma never does allow the stable-yard, as you know very well."

"But I *must* look at the pigeons, nurse. Look there! look there!" clapping her hands, and screaming, as seven or eight flew together, with one movement and one sound, to the top of the pigeon-house. "Oh, nurse, what a nice place this is! how glad I am papa bought it. I like it fifty times better than our stupid old house."

"And in a week, Camilla, you will be wishing for a new one again," Reginald said, still gravely.

"And if I do," replied the child, looking wistfully up in his face, "what does it matter? Why shouldn't I wish, and what is it that makes you cross to-night, Reginald?"

"I'm not cross," he said, with an emphasis on the word.

"Now, Mr. St. Maur, do you please to take Miss St. Maur into the garden. Here comes the carriage, and the stablemen, and the servants, and it isn't at all a proper place for a young lady."

"I'm not a young lady, nurse, and I

won't be a young lady. But I'll go into the garden with Reginald, if he likes it better, and if he will play with me there. Come along," seizing his hand; "do come along; and goodbye you pretty pigeons till to-morrow."

But when they reached the garden, Reginald was as indisposed for play as he had been before. He sate down on a garden-seat, looking about him with an air of grave contemplation, while the child flew from bed to bed, from bush to bush, from vista to vista, in an ecstasy of delight. She came at last,—her bonnet thrown back, her long curls floating, her cheeks crimson, —and threw herself at her brother's feet.

"Oh, Reginald! what *do* you sit here for, and what *is* the matter, you silly, silly boy?"

"I was thinking of the people who are gone away, Camilla."

"What people?" and she looked up eagerly in his face.

"Didn't you hear what Margaret was telling me last night, about the lady and the boy who used to live here?"

"No, I didn't. What sort of a boy? was he as big as you?"

"I don't know. Margaret said a boy; and she said he was fonder of this place than ever you can be, Camilla, and that it had quite broken his heart to leave it. I know she made me wish never to come near the place."

"How does a heart break, Reginald? Does it crack?"

"I don't know what it does; but I feel what she means by it. She said he had everything in the world that he could wish for; and such a pony, that knew him, and ate out of his hand; and all the people so fond of him, that when he went, everybody was crying, she said, as if they had lost a child. . . ."

"Then, what a silly boy to go," Camilla said, emphatically.

"But he couldn't help it. Margaret said they were too poor to live here any longer, and that the boy must go and learn to earn his bread."

"What is, to earn his bread?"

"To work, I suppose, Camilla; not to play any more."

"Oh, poor, poor boy!" she said, pityingly.

"I should not mind the working, Camilla; but the going away and never coming back; and leaving all his things, his dogs, and his pony, and"

"Oh, look, look at the pigeons!" screamed Camilla, jumping up and running along the lawn, while the pigeons flew over her head.

"I wish we never had left Evesham," said Reginald, gloomily, as she rejoined him; "I never shall feel at home here. I feel as if I was taking the boy's things."

"I dare say he has got a prettier place, as we have," suggested Camilla, consolingly.

"No, he hasn't. He's gone to London, to live in a dirty street."

"Oh! I wish we could go to London, too. Mamma says they have such pretty things—such dogs, and horses, and dolls, and teathings. What a happy boy to go to London!"

Was Ernest De Grey happy in London? In answer to some such question regarding one of his heroines, Walter Scott has beautifully answered: "Reader, she *was* happy; for, whatever may be alleged to the contrary, by the scorner and the sceptic, to each duty performed there is assigned a degree of mental peace, and high consciousness of honourable exertion, corresponding to the difficulty of the task accomplished. That rest of the body which succeeds to hard and industrious toil, is not to be compared to the repose which the spirit enjoys under similar circumstances." The truth of this passage few will be disposed to doubt; and yet I am bound to say, that it was not perfectly exemplified in the case of Ernest de Grey. He had behaved most nobly. To his father, to his mother,—in all the painful tasks that were assigned him, without a word of murmur or repining—he had shown the same generous, dutiful disposition, which had characterized his childish years. He did not think of himself; he spoke little of the past, cheerfully

of the present, hopefully of the future ; and after the evening of the first announcement, even his mother's eyes failed to read how deeply the sacrifice was felt. But when the excitement was over, and they were established in a small house, in one of those dull, uniform streets beyond the gay-looking world of Belgravia, his spirits and his resolution began to sink. He was too young, perhaps, to feel in its full force the blessing which the peace of an approving conscience brings, too restless with regrets for the past, and dreams of the future, to feel *peace*, in thoughts of peace of any kind. He could, as many can, heroically submit to one great trial ; but he failed, as many fail, in the smaller trials of everyday existence.

Accustomed to the freedom of a country life, fond of all sports and active amusements, his spirit began to rebel against the imprisonment of London. He could have borne it, however, and borne it well, if there had been a prospect of future release ; but one word, which once inadvertently had fallen from his father's lips, haunted his

imagination and oppressed his spirits night and day. That one word was *clerk*. To be tied to a desk in London for ever!—every feeling within him revolted from such a destiny. And yet perhaps even to this he would have taught himself to submit, if it had not been for the sudden reawakening of an old fancy, after a slumber of many years. Superseded by the love of his home, suppressed by the perfect satisfaction found in that home for all the adventurous tastes and active habits of his boyhood, his martial ardour had been lulled to rest—but it did but sleep; springing up in the monotony of the present, consoling for the disappointment of the past, it took possession of his fancy with a violence that startled and mastered him, gilding the future with visions as glittering as they were idle and delusive. He knew that it was impossible, during his father's lifetime. Their only means of support was his mother's fortune, a sum of £13,000; and the purchase of commissions from an annual income of barely £400 a year, even his vague imagination told him

was not a very practicable scheme ; but the imagination, especially of the young, is little bounded by the limits of possibility. Good sense and good feeling kept him silent ; neither by word nor look did he betray the secret of his heart's desire, but satisfied with this exertion, he repaid himself for the sacrifice by dreaming a never-ending dream. Instead of battling with the excitement of his mind, he fed it by every means in his power. Wherever soldiers were to be seen, or sounds of military music were to be heard, there his steps were wandering. Day by day unfailingly he presented himself at the Horse-Guards, to watch the mounting of the guard ; hour after hour he would hang about Apsley-House, for one look at the Duke of Wellington—then would return home, to wile away the long dull evening by the perusal of the lives of highwaymen, pirates, and other celebrated and adventurous characters (picked up for a few pence at a book-stall), which sent him to bed in a fever at once of excitement and despair. So he passed the early days of his life in

London ; dissatisfied with all around him, and most of all dissatisfied with himself.

Mrs. De Grey saw her son's failing spirits and sighed : of the cause of his greatest depression she was not aware. She did not know that the word "clerk" had reached his ears ; for Mr. De Grey, unaccustomed to deal openly with Ernest, had forbidden the mention of the plan, until some hope of its success could be obtained,—and Ernest in the dread of hearing the certainty of his doom, forbore to make an inquiry. But she could guess from his restless deportment, the hopes and fears, the dreams and regrets that were agitating him, and she sighed. But though she sighed, it was *for* him, not *over* him. She was not one of those who groan at the least failure in human perfection—experience had taught her that, with rare exceptions, it is through mental struggle and mental failure that the character is formed and perfected ; and though she sighed for him during the process—though she could not but sigh that disappointment should so early cloud his

sunny brow and buoyant spirit—she felt no fear, no despondency as to the ultimate result.

One night, Ernest went to bed fresh from the attractive and exciting annals of the life of Claude Duval. Though within a day or two of November, the night was hot and close, and Ernest could not sleep; he tossed to and fro, restless and excited, and, turn where he would, the word *clerk* presented itself to his eyes. There is, I think, no madness or wildness to be compared to the insanity of even the sanest of mortals in the course of a restless night. Small things assume such immense importance in the mind—the future, whether the dreams of that future be joyful or sorrowful, swells into such extraordinary magnitude. For “a solution of a bright hope,” it seems impossible to wait—a trial, a coming or a fancied trial it seems impossible to bear; we appear to have suddenly become all sensation, and with giant feelings to be waiting, or preparing for gigantic events. In such a mood of mind and such a state of nerves, Ernest was

lying on this restless night, when there passed before him in dreamy vision, but in giant proportions, the life of a clerk:—he saw himself rising in the morning to the impenetrable gloom of a yellow November fog (it was in the month of November, that his imaginary life chose to picture itself), he saw himself at breakfast in the small dark dining-room of their present habitation; through the dismal misty streets he followed himself at ten o'clock to his office—there he passed his day in the midst of figures which it made his brain ache even to think of. He accompanied himself back to his home, when the scanty daylight had long since faded; and there with dizzy eyes and a bewildered brain, endeavoured to wile away six weary hours till night and sleep should come to his release. Again, and again, and again the vision passed before his fancy, till at length he saw himself a decrepid old man, feebly tottering along the streets to his hateful and hated task. I hope my readers can imagine the horrors of a life like this when presented through the mag-

nifying-glass of sleepless and feverish eyes. Poor Ernest turned from side to side, endeavouring to find one ray of light to gild his dreary picture, but in vain; not even a sunshiny morning would come at his call. He sprang out of bed, looked round his tiny room, rushed to the window, and by the faint moonlight gazed upon the rows of roofs and chimneys,—the only prospect commanded by his room; then drawing back with a feeling of despair, and stamping with his foot upon the ground, he pronounced that *it could not, and it should not be*. If no other means of escape offered themselves he would enlist as a private soldier and win his way to distinction. He returned to bed calmed in mind, and possessed by the beauty of the new vision. Unlike the last—colours, bright colours, came thick and fast to add to its brightness. His late studies, which probably suggested the idea, suggested also the pictures in which to adorn it; he saw himself an object of interest and admiration; his short probation was quickly over, he was received amongst the officers, distinc-

tions were showered upon him; he was captain, major, colonel, in less time than it takes to write the words, and he fell into a sweet sleep, a general officer in full uniform, leading on his troops to victory.

These seem childish dreams, but Ernest's mind was youthful enough to be lulled and dazzled by dreams even more childish than these. He was still nothing but a boy.

With the dawn of day, something of the brilliancy of his last consolatory vision faded; nothing is more disappointing than a morning light on a midnight picture; but still, even considered in the sober colours of morning, it retained enough of its beauty and promise to induce him to repeat with calm resolve the feverish determination of his restless hours; it should be his last resource, but a resource it should be.

In such a mood and with such a purpose, he went down to breakfast; his night and morning meditations had made him late, and breakfast was half over before he appeared. His father was laughing as he entered the room; rather an unusual and as it might have

seemed a gratifying occurrence; but Ernest was in no laughing mood, and irritated by the sound, he hurriedly kissed his mother, and sat down without raising his eyes.

“Half-past nine, Ernest,” said Mr. De Grey looking at his watch, “this will never do.”

Ernest finished the sentence to himself as he fancied had been intended, “*never do for a clerk*,” and he answered his father with some petulance.

“Are you ill, Ernest?” inquired his mother gravely. Ernest looked up and met her anxious affectionate gaze; his irritation vanished in a moment, and he said, colouring crimson,

“Not ill, mother; but I am afraid a little cross.”

“And why cross, my dear boy?” she asked smilingly.

He shook his head and said no more.

“Your father was laughing, Ernest, as you came in, at a strange letter I have had; it partly concerns you—will you read it?”

As she spoke she put into his hand, with

a quiet smile, a strangely scrawled and tumbled letter.

Ernest looked over it, and as he read his colour deepened and his heart began to beat; it was as follows :—

“ Berners-street, Oct. 26.

“ MY DEAR GERTRUDE,—You don’t remember me; but I remember you. The last time I saw you, you were in a dirty pinafore. I know it was a dirty pinafore; your parents didn’t bedizen you as the new generation are bedizened; I hate the sight of them. Since I saw you I have been in India, and now I am come back. Because I say I have been in India, don’t you suppose that I’m come back a Nabob. I’m not. I’ve got enough and that’s all. I want to see you and your son. I suppose he is a young man by this time. I hate young men; they’re all coxcombs; empty-headed coxcombs; very different to the young men in my day; but as he’s your son, and my old and best friend’s grandson, I want to see him. Come and see me if you

think it worth while. I've heard of your misfortunes and I'm sorry for them, but I can't help you. I tell you at once I've got a relation, and I shan't cut him out for anybody. But I shall be glad to see you and your son, if you think it worth while to visit an old, wizened, paralytic scarecrow.

“Your father's old friend,

“MARK WATTS.”

“Shall we go, Ernest?” asked his mother quietly.

He looked at her in astonishment; bright visions were dancing before his eyes.

“Yes, I think you have no doubt,” she said smiling; and the letter was folded up, and the conversation changed.

CHAPTER VI.

Moments there are in life—alas! how few
When casting cold prudential doubts aside,
We take a generous impulse for our guide;
And following promptly what the heart thinks best,
Commit to Providence the rest;
Sure that no after reckoning will arise
Of shame or sorrow—for the heart is wise.

OLIVER NEWMAN.

THE following day, Mrs. De Grey and Ernest set off for Berners-street. She said little as they went along, and that little was rather intended to damp than to excite his expectations. She herself scarcely knew what to hope or think; that he intended to do something for Ernest she could not but suppose, but the idea that presented itself, "India," was a saddening one to her. Of Mr. Watts himself she had little remembrance, though with the once familiar name visions began to return of a little old

man,—so her fancy pictured him,—who used to kiss and pinch her cheeks somewhat too heartily.

They reached the door, rang the bell, and were admitted by an old servant, who shut them into a room without a fire, and with both windows open.

Mrs. De Grey sat down; Ernest wandered restlessly about, gazed at some stuffed birds without seeing them; stared at the clock, and wondered what o'clock it was, without perceiving that the clock had stopped and the hands were off.

At last the door was opened, and the little wizened, paralytic old man was wheeled into the room. He took no notice till the door was shut, and the servant gone, then, quietly stretching out his hand, he said, "How d'ye do, Gertrude?"

Something of old familiarity, of former days and former friendship, stole over Mrs. De Grey at the sight of him.

There is so strange a freshness in the remembrance of the friends of our early years, that of them it may be truly said,

“There is no such thing as forgetting possible.” The memory may seem to be effaced for a time, but when it does awake, it awakes perfect, as it was : there is nothing to be done ; we meet as we parted. No after friendships have this peculiarity.

“The friendships of our youth are often seen
To share the freshness of those vernal years,
And spite of hardening trials, withering cares,
Deep in the heart to blossom ever green ;
Needing but few soft breezes sweeping o’er,
To bid them lift their heads and bloom once more.”

“You see we have obeyed you,” she said with a smile, as she drew her chair nearer to him.

“Ah ! Gertrude,” he said, looking at her and shaking his head ; “I shouldn’t have known you. Where is the dirty pinafore and the long fair hair ?”

She smiled, and then sighed. Her thoughts were flowing strangely back to the merry days of her childhood ; and upon her ear there came the sound of a light laughing voice, long hushed in death.

The old man contemplated her, and his thoughts seemed to follow hers. He held

out his shrivelled hand again; in the movement his head turned, and his eyes fell on Ernest, who had withdrawn himself to the window.

“Who’s that?” he said in a startled voice.

Mrs. De Grey roused herself, and looked up. The shrivelled hand was pointing at Ernest, and the small grey eyes were darting from under the pent and shaggy brows.

“That is Ernest, my son,” she said.

The head dropped, and the eyes closed, and he remarked mournfully, “The old dotard thought it was Harry.”

“He is like—very like—” said Mrs. De Grey, almost for the first time struck with the greatness of the likeness.

“Ah! Gertrude,” exclaimed the old man again; and he dashed his shrivelled hand across his eyes. “But this is behaving like an old doting fool. Come here, young man; let me look at you.”

Ernest approached, and stood before him, too much occupied in examining the strange old being to feel awkward beneath his scrutiny.

"What is your name, young man?" he began, like the Catechism.

"Ernest."

"That's a fool's name; I'm ashamed of you, Gertrude."

"It is my husband's name," she said with a smile.

"The more fool he! Why isn't he Mark, or John, or Thomas? I hate your new-fangled names. How old are you, Mr. Ernest?"

"Sixteen."

"It's a bad age, now-a-days at least; all the boys think they are men; empty-headed coxcombs, I hate the sight of them! Look there!" he said, nodding his head out of window; "look at him! five-foot high, and a cigar in his mouth—addling his brains with smoke—thinks himself a king. Draw down the blinds, Mr. Ernest; I hate the sight of him!"

Ernest obeyed, laughing.

"Sit down, young man, I want to speak to you. What did you come here for?"

and he fixed his penetrating eyes on the boy's face.

Ernest coloured, and laughed again.

"Did you expect to get anything out of me? answer me that."

Youth, it is said, is acute in perception. Mrs. De Grey might have been puzzled to answer this home question; but Ernest, without apparent thought or reflection upon what it would be *best* to say, answered steadily, though with a colour mounting to his temples:—

"Not *expected*, but *hoped*."

"You did, did you," exclaimed the old man in extreme delight. "Well, young man, you shan't be disappointed. I can't do much, but I'll do something. I know you think I'm rich; I'm not, I tell you; I've just enough, and that's all. I hate your money making; I always did. I might have had more, if I pleased, but I didn't want it; and if I had it I shouldn't give it you. I tell you I shouldn't! I like young men to work. Now listen to me, Mr. Ernest. There are but two professions in the world—so I think,

at least. I hate your lawyers; they're all rogues. I hate your physicians; they're all quacks. Sailors are necessary evils; I hate their noise; I've had enough of them. There are but two, the army and the church: fight for your country, or take your countrymen to Heaven. Now, Mr. Ernest, listen to me. I give you your choice; I'll buy you a commission, or I'll send you to college, as you please; take your choice; but mind this, if I buy a commission, it will be in a good marching regiment: I'll have none of your Guards, none of your swaggering puppies; you shall see the world—work your way. Now take your choice."

Ernest sat with downcast eyes; he would not, dared not speak, but his heart was beating as if it would have leapt from the feeble bonds that withheld it. The object of his existence was attained: the loss of what he had so much loved had been then but to bring him to this, the gratification of the first and strongest passion of his nature.

There was a silence—a short one, but it seemed an age. It was broken by Mrs. De

Grey. With her quiet smile, and soft voice, and with that steady, serene manner which is so often a covering to deep emotion and inward struggle, she said,

“We shall not be long in making a choice; Ernest is already in heart a soldier.”

“I didn’t speak to you, Gertrude,” cried the old man sharply; “let Mr. Ernest speak for himself.”

There are moments in life—single moments in duration,—yet in their consequences so weighty, in operation so wonderful, so full of thought, feeling, and action, that they seem to rise out of time, and to belong rather to that state of being when time shall be no more. Such a moment was that now passed by Ernest De Grey. In that moment he lived whole years of life; thought as he never had thought before; pondered upon life, and its meaning; weighed, conquered, armed himself; caught from his mother her quiet spirit of self-conquest; and calling into memory all her love for him, repaid it with a love and devotion which contained within itself the sacrifice of his existence.

It was but a moment ; he then looked up at the old man, and said,

“ I choose the Church.”

“ Ernest !” exclaimed his mother in a tone of warning, anxious, loving remonstrance. She saw his fading colour, his eye averted from herself ; she read the sacrifice, and for the moment refused to suffer it to be made.

“ My dear Gertrude, will you be still ?” said the old man impatiently ; “ Mr. Ernest is old enough to decide for himself. Don’t you speak another word. Well, young man, is your mind made up ; I ask once more, and once only. I ’ll have no shifting and shuffling afterwards. Take your choice.”

“ My mind is quite made up,” Ernest repeated. He got up, approached his mother and kissed her ; and then looking at her with his clear, truthful eyes, said, “ I know that you think I have made a great sacrifice ; but, mother, it is no sacrifice since I feel that it pleases you.”

Mrs. De Grey raised her eyes to his face, but said nothing ; not for worlds would she

have further opposed his will ; not for worlds would she have refused the offering he made to her love, not for worlds would she have deprived him of the blessing that rests upon the conquest of a selfish passion ; and yet she felt at the moment a very certain truth, that there is often as much heroism in submitting to the fulfilment of our wishes as there is in conquering them.

The old man held out his hand ; Ernest took it and thanked him.

“ I won’t be thanked ! ” he cried, impatiently ; “ what are thanks good for ? I hate them. Do your duty, young man, and I shall be thanked enough. But that wasn’t what I’d got to say ; what I’d got to say was this.” He paused, and taking the young, healthful, vigorous hand between his trembling, shrivelled fingers, continued with a slow, reverent manner, “ God bless you, Mr. Ernest ! may the blessing of an old man rest upon you all your life long ! It isn’t a light thing—don’t forget that you have had it. And now go away,” he dropped his hand ; “ go away both of you, and never

come again. I don't want to see you any more. Go away, Gertrude, and mind what I say; don't come again. I tell you I won't see you," he said, raising his voice impatiently, as a few words of earnest remonstrance fell from Mrs. De Grey. "I know what I wish, and I will have my way. I will have no sweet, young, loving, innocent faces to tie me and bind me to the world I want to get free from. Go away—go away, and never come again. I won't see you, I tell you,—I won't. I turn away the first servant who lets you into the house." He waved his hands impatiently, till alarmed at his excitement, they both left the room. He kept his word,—he saw them no more.

CHAPTER VII.

Though, as you have said, the vernal bloom
Of his first spirits fading, leaves him changed,
'Tis not to worse. His mind is as a meadow
Of various grasses, rich and fresh beneath,
But o'er the surface some that come to seed
Have cast a colour of sobriety.

EDWIN THE FAIR.

Let us go forth, and resolutely dare
In sweat of brow to toil our little day ;
And if a tear flow on our task of care
In memory of those spring hours past away
Brush it not by !
Our hearts to God, to brother men
Aid, labour, blessing, prayer, and then
To these, a sigh.

R. M. MILNES.

TIME flies. This is sometimes a truism, trite, unmeaning, and common-place ; and sometimes a truth of very serious import. At the present moment, the latter character may certainly be claimed for the remark.

for we have to fly rapidly over a large space of time, and a large portion of life. Ten years have come and gone,—ten years of youth and vigour,—ten years full of feeling, and full of event, had we the time to dwell upon them.

It was at the end of these ten years, and again at the close of a beautiful August evening, that Ernest De Grey stood on the brow of the hill which overlooked his former home, on the very spot which had witnessed the announcement of his lost hopes, and his altered destiny.

It is difficult exactly to define in what romance consists ; but there are events in life, peculiar combinations of circumstances to which the epithet romantic is at once, and without thought, applied. These events need not be strange or startling ; they may be brought about in the easiest and most natural manner ; the steps which lead to the combination may be each in themselves obvious and commonplace ; and yet over the whole there rests a halo — a poetic colouring, which is felt by the most un-

poetic and insensible. Something, no doubt, there is in the character of the persons to whom such events occur ; for there are persons whose cold hands and shallow glances turn all they touch, and all that is spread before them into dryness and insipidity. It would, however, have required a very remarkable degree of coldness and dryness to dissipate the romantic colouring which rested on the circumstance (although nothing could be simpler or more commonplace than the events which led to it), that Ernest De Grey was appointed to the living of the parish in which his former home stood. This appointment was, as it seemed, a mere chance. He was a curate in an adjoining county, but there was a distance of thirty miles between his new and his old abode. He was invited by his rector to accompany him on a visit to the bishop of the diocese. The visit lasted but a few hours. Ernest spoke little, and little was said to him. He was not aware,—his rector was not aware,—that he had excited any peculiar degree of attention ; yet a few

weeks afterwards the living of the Parish of Cranleigh was offered to the young curate :

“ A chance it seem'd to be,
But such a chance as rules our destiny.”

And once more Ernest stood and gazed upon the beauty of his lost inheritance ;—and fondly and admiringly his eye wandered round ; but the bound of the heart with which he had heard of his destiny,—but the rapture with which he had contemplated a return to the scenes of his youth was stilled and faded now. He stood and gazed, but his heart was heavy, and his thoughts were joyless and sad.

We are, I think, too much disposed to look upon the clergy as an order of men separate from ourselves ; not separate in that sense in which we *should* so regard them, separated by a peculiar seal and sanctity, but separate in nature : we are not, I mean, disposed to allow for them the temptations and infirmities of a common humanity ; we are too much inclined to suppose that the vows which sever them from their fellows, withdraw them also from the trials and

failures common to all in fighting against "the world, the flesh, and the devil." So at least it has always seemed to me, when the errors, negligences, and infirmities of those who, while they are clergy, still are men, are dwelt upon by a harsh-judging world.

Ernest De Grey was not one who would have fulfilled the perfect ideal of what a clergyman should be. As a child, as a boy, he had been what has been happily called "very human;" and very human he was still. The life he led was a life opposed to every feeling and natural impulse within him; and though he struggled manfully to submit himself to it, there were many hours when his spirit was bowed by the weight of unwelcome responsibility; and when his fancy revolted from the picture of the perpetual struggle and warfare before him. He was one of those separated by the seal of Heaven from their fellow men; but many unmarked by that seal were less tied and bound to earth than he, by the weight of a craving earth-loving nature.

He had never repented of the resolution so suddenly taken in the old man's room,—he would have repeated it again and again: but that resolution had been taken not from any call he had felt to duties so serious, to an office so holy, but simply from a motive of love and duty to his mother; and that motive being but a human motive, was not at all times sufficiently powerful to animate him amidst the painful, and often thankless, tasks to which he was called to devote himself. Let it not be supposed that Ernest should be blamed for having undertaken a responsibility so solemn, from a human motive. That motive, filial duty, is in itself so pure, is from “passion's dross so refined and clear,” so contains within itself the germ of all religious feeling, that none have ever acted upon it, in any course of duty, or condition of life, and failed to find a blessing. It is but the statement—a fact,—it was a human motive; and though sufficiently powerful to prevent his resolution from wavering, it could not at all times turn

his repulsive tasks into a labour of love and delight.

There was no want of seriousness in the manner in which Ernest first prepared for, and finally entered upon his labours. Once resolved, he endeavoured as best he could to render himself not unworthy the holy office he held. His mind was so true and sincere, that there was no tampering with his conscience,—no excusing himself under the plea of natural unfitness; so far as he saw his duties, he tried to fulfil them. He was not perhaps very quick in discovering them: other eyes might see them straight before him, and he might pass them by; but once beheld, they were firmly and unshrinkingly performed. On minds of this character a blessing must ever rest; for there is nothing to be compared in value to truth and sincerity of heart. But improvement is a gradual process: day by day the strife of inclination with duty has to be renewed; and they are strong indeed who never faint and are weary. Ernest

had not this strength : he was far, still very far, from perfection ; his duties were to him but duties still, hard oftentimes and laborious : his life was warfare still ; his future, a future still on which his eyes scarcely dared to rest.

Since last we met him he had passed from boyhood into manhood ; and the deepened expression of his countenance, and the subdued and even serious quietness of his manners bore witness to the change. But the change was not very deep,—in heart he was still a boy : the thirst for happiness was still as strong, the tastes of his boyhood still springing up as fresh and vigorous within him. It was not therefore strange that as he stood and gazed upon the scenes of his free and happy youth,—as he thought of the days when the name of duty had been a light and unfelt burden, his spirits should sink and a cloud of unusual melancholy settle about his head.

Fully, however, to understand his mood of mind, more perfectly to pourtray his character, and to reveal him in all the

weakness and humanity of his nature, we must go back to an earlier hour of the day, and bear him company on his first arrival at his new home.

It was about four o'clock when he dismounted from a post-chaise, and entered the parsonage-house. It was a pretty low-roofed picturesque building with a green lawn before it, and a flower-garden on one side. It stood at the borders of the village, thirty or forty yards from the road, shadowed from the heat by fine spreading oaks, and guarded from intrusive eyes by a well-covered trelliced paling. In former days he had often regarded it with admiration; of late he had often thought of it with pleasure, but as he entered it now he sighed. It was in all the dreary discomfort and untidiness of a new arrival; and although such a state of things is to some minds an incentive to exertion, and an agreeable excitement, it was not so to him. He was not luxurious,—he had never been so: but he liked comfort,—he liked domestic comfort, he liked to feel at home. He walked into

the lonely drawing-room, and sighed again. He was now to live alone ; and of late he had thought of this with much pleasure—(for although naturally of a joyous and elastic disposition, he was fastidious in his tastes ; not endowed with superhuman patience when those tastes were offended ; and much had suffered under the trite remarks and harmless, but unmeaning pleasantries of the good dull rector, with whom he had hitherto resided) : but now as he entered the disorderly room, a sense of desolation made his heart sink. And while still looking about him with a gaze of blank despair, his temper was assailed, and well-nigh overcome, by the worry of domestic cares, and the demand upon his wandering attention for considerations of household economy. In short, the first effect of the return to scenes which, at a distance, he had pictured as “redolent with joy and youth,” was far from bringing with it the fresh and joyous feeling of “a second spring.”

“Pray have these boxes carried away, it looks so uncomfortable,” he said to the lady

who had been selected from the village to preside over his household, as he wandered round the carpetless drawing-room, strewed as it was with hay and straw, paper, and lids of boxes.

"I can't do it myself, sir," replied Mrs. Cook, who was heated with scrubbing and unpacking, and who among her many virtues did not boast of an imperturbable temper; "and Thomas says he can't do it, and John is looking after the horse."

"Well, Mrs. Cook, I shall go out for a walk; and if you can get anybody to clear the room, I shall be much obliged to you."

"If you please, sir, will you give me the keys of the linen-chest? The things must be got somehow before night; and there's more to do than a horse could do already."

"I haven't got the keys."

"Thomas bade me ask you, sir: he says you gave *him* no keys."

After a search, the keys were found; and Ernest took up his hat and prepared for a retreat.

“What do you please to have for dinner, sir?” Mrs. Cook began again.

“Oh, I leave that entirely to you. I suppose you have ordered something into the house?”

“I did, sir, make so bold, without orders, for I got no orders from nobody. And where will you please to dine; and what time, sir, do you please to have dinner served up? It isn’t my way, sir, to be without orders, and it’s more than a servant can abear to have no notice taken when she does her best.”

“I will take more notice another day,” Ernest said, good-naturedly. “Put dinner where you please, wherever you can find an empty table; and it had better be ready at seven o’clock.”

“There’s no end of things wanting in the kitchen, sir; there isn’t a boiler to be seen, and the jack is in a sad rickety state, and I can’t find no pastry-roller nowhere; and to-morrow’s Sunday, too!”

“Never mind for the present,” he said, indifferently; “I suppose we shall get right

in time." And he put on his hat and opened the door.

"There's been no orders given, sir, about the rooms; there's been no orders given about nothing. I never heard of such a way of coming to a place. I made so bold as to choose an apartment for myself and my small matters; but Thomas has got no orders, and he doesn't know where to lay out your honour's things; and the house will all be topsy-turvy, if there isn't some notice taken."

Ernest put down his hat, and followed his conductress over the house, agreeing to every suggestion she chose to make; till coming to a room a few steps higher than the others, from the window of which a sight of Clare Abbey might be caught, he said, "No, Mrs. Cook, I change my mind: this shall be my room."

"This, sir? Why, it's no better than a coalhole compared to those more spacious apartments. It will do for a young gentleman from college, sir, or for a traveller for a night or so, but not for your honour."

“It must do for me,” he said, laughing, “and the travellers shall have the more spacious rooms;” and he stood leaning against the window, unheeding the remonstrances which were poured upon his ear. He was choosing for himself a dangerous indulgence. How dangerous he could not guess.

“Is Lord Vere in the country?” he inquired at last.

“Yes, sir; his lordship is always in the country.”

“Has he many children?”

“He has but the two, sir — Mr. St. Maur and the young lady.” In the anticipation of a little gossip, Mrs. Cook drew nearer, and laying aside her state and offended dignity, and with her dignity her more select phraseology, she continued: “If you wants to know about the fam’ly, sir, I can’t tell you but very little about them; for though they lives here the whole year round, they never comes amongst the poor as your good mamma used to do. Sometimes I sees her ladyship and the young lady in the

bairrooche, as they drives through Cranleigh now and again ; and now and again I sees them at Church : but they isn't very regular church-goers, only when Mr. St. Maur is at home. He is a very fine young gentleman, sir, and discreet in his ways, I hears ; but then he 's as haught and as proud as —, I forgets the caparison, sir. Oh ! they all wants a deal of good doing to them, and a deal of preaching, sir, and that 's the truth."

"We all do that, Mrs. Cook," said Ernest, gravely, retreating from the window. There was no feeling stronger in his mind than charity in his judgments. His sense of his own weakness made him, perhaps, even faultily tender in dealing with the temptations and infirmities of others.

"Well, they does, sir," she said, complacently ; "but some wants it more nor others : and I often thinks as I sees my lady prancing along in her bairrooche, how hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of heaven."

Ernest said no more ; but leaving Mrs.

Cook to arrange the house, he set off on the lonely ramble to which alone his melancholy mood of mind was suited. Few as her words of gossip had been, they had excited another train of sad and a new train of repining feeling within. He remembered his own youthful dreams of philanthropy, vague indeed, but dwelt on many an hour fondly in his breast. He remembered how he had intended to be the father of the tenantry; realizing some perhaps never perfectly fulfilled ideal of a gentleman of the olden time,—how his cares and attentions to their welfare were to bring in “a golden year,” where there was to be no more want, no more distress, no more crime. He turned his eye as he passed along upon the Church, still disfigured by unsightly additions and monstrous deformities, and he remembered the hopes he had once so enthusiastically formed of restoring it to the beauty and purity of its original proportions; and dreaming as he went, he marvelled why the opportunities had been denied to him

which would have been used to the glory of God and for the good of man. And while he indulged in the easy pleasure of imaginative virtue and benevolence, he scarcely thought of the holier, if not higher, labours to which he had been called.

He reached the brow of the hill which overlooked the valley, and there, leaning his back against a gate, he stood with folded arms indulging in a luxury of meditation ; while unproved, although unbidden, these vague, regretful, distrustful thoughts chased each other through his mind.

He was roused from his reverie by the sound of a sweet voice and a musical laugh from the high-road. Turning hastily round, he observed two figures on horseback approaching at a rapid pace. He felt interested and excited, and contemplated them with much curiosity. One was a young man, extremely handsome and *aristocratic* in his appearance, whose proud and stately bearing, visible even at a first glance, suited well with the lofty style of his beauty. The other was a young lady,—very young,

—she could not be much more than sixteen. Her likeness to her companion betrayed at once the nature of their relationship; but it was a likeness of a peculiar kind, which struck you strangely at first, and was almost forgotten afterwards. Her features were the same finely-carved regular features—her head had the same peculiar stately grace—her whole appearance the same air of “patrician beauty.” But in her movements, in her countenance, in her large, long-shaped hazel eyes, half mischievous, half melancholy, there was a wildness, an airiness, a grace, which gave to the character of her beauty an expression totally dissimilar. She was dressed in a fashion which is, I hope, gradually displacing the modern ungraceful riding-dress. A prettily-shaped jacket of black velvet fell over the skirt of her habit, and the long curls of her bright gold, or pale auburn hair, floated from beneath a low Spanish hat, round which a lace veil was loosely streaming. She formed the very ideal for the lady of a hawking picture of the olden time; indeed about her

and about her companion likewise there was that ideal, poetic, colouring, which one expresses, perhaps somewhat vaguely by the words "looking like a picture."

In passing the place where Ernest stood, the horse of the young lady, either from a rut or other obstruction in the road, or from some carelessness on the part of the fair rider, stumbled, and, for a moment, there was danger of her being thrown to the ground. With one bound, Ernest swung himself over the gate, and laid his hand upon the bridle ; but before he could grasp it, the young lady had recovered her seat, and laughingly patting the beautiful and penitent creature, exclaimed, " Poor Brenda, I wonder whose fault it was ! "

Looking up immediately afterwards, she was about to thank Ernest, who had retreated to the side of the road ; but she was forestalled by her companion. With some haughtiness the young man raised his hat, and slightly bending his head, said,

" My sister is much obliged to you for your assistance ; " then, stooping down, and

stroking Brenda's flowing mane, he continued, "Come, Camilla, it is late;" and immediately put his own horse in motion.

The young lady followed without speaking, but turning with a smile to Ernest, and a flitting blush on her fair cheek, she courteously bowed her head, her long curls sweeping over the horse's neck as she bent, and rode away.

Ernest looked after them with an eager, intense, inquiring gaze, till they were out of sight; he then bounded over the gate, and rapidly retraced his steps homewards. But he was no longer the same person who had so languidly wandered along an hour before. He glanced over the valley, and brighter than the noon-day sun fell the shadows of approaching evening across his path. Where was the gloom of despondency, where were the cheerless prospects of a life of struggle and warfare? A ray of light had fallen across his path, a spark of interest was kindling the future into beauty. His life, which of late he had contemplated as "toward evening," shone bright again with

“hues of the rich unfolding morn.” New thoughts, new hopes, new strength, new self-devotion, new animation,

“By some soft touch invisible
Around his path were taught to swell.”

How or wherefore this change of temper, he could not perhaps himself have explained ; yet there was nothing strange or miraculous in it. The mere sight of these two beings, by fancy easily named,—strangers in their individual character, but no strangers to the haunts of his imagination :—the sight of them in their youth and their beauty, and gifted with that lofty high-born air, which so strongly appeals to the fancy, this was in itself enough to lure him into a future he sometimes shrank from contemplating, with thoughts of hope, and interest, and companionship. But such sudden changes of mood are by no means uncommon. Ernest's lively and sensitive mind was peculiarly susceptible of sudden impressions ; for his was

“That nature of humanity
Which both ways doth rebound—rejoicing now
With soarings of the soul, anon brought low.”

But all men—with the exception of a very few, who, as Fuller says, “seem to be made of one entire bone, without any joints”—are as easily acted upon as the chords of the Æolian harp. A fleeting cloud, whose form we have scarcely time to seize, passes over our brain, and we sink into gloom; a soft breath, coming we know not whence, and going we know not where, plays upon the cloud, and it dissolves into mist again. There are some verses by Hood, which quaintly, but prettily, describe one of these sudden, insensible changes, from darkness to light :

“Farewell life! my senses swim,
And the world is growing dim;
Thronging shadows cloud the light,
Like the advent of the night.
Colder, colder, colder still,
Upward starts a vapour chill;
Strong the earthy odour grows,
I smell the mould above the rose.

“Welcome life! the spirit strives,
Strength returns, and hope revives;
Cloudy fears and shapes forlorn
Fly like shadows at the morn;
O'er the earth there comes a bloom,
Sunny light, for sullen gloom;
Warm perfume for vapours cold,
I smell the rose above the mould.”

On Ernest's return to the parsonage, he found an invitation awaiting him, from which he would gladly have freed himself. His young curate stood in the doorway, expressing his regret that duty should have compelled him to be absent during the afternoon, and requesting, with an earnestness which would take no denial, that Ernest would leave his uncomfortable home, and pass the evening with his mother and himself. Mrs. Cook warmly seconded the propriety of the step, and Ernest gave way. He had spent four hours of an unceasingly rainy day at the house of his curate on the occasion of his induction, a month before this time, and the remembrance of those four hours were such as to make him shrink from a repetition, especially on this day, when his mind was full of thoughts on the past, the present, and the future. But he was one of those people who have an innate dislike to a fuss ; and he was too happy to escape from Mr. Hervey's persuasions and Mrs. Cook's remonstrances by a hasty acquiescence.

Mr. Hervey, the curate, was an amiable

young man, exemplary in his conduct both as a son and a clergyman ; but he was dull and commonplace, and more tedious than dull people usually are, from the insatiable desire which possessed him for information. From dulness of a talkative narrating kind it is easy to escape, the unfettered mind wandering pleasantly during the flow of the discourse ; but questions are a serious infliction. Mr. Hervey's conversation was chiefly confined to the interrogative mood. He loved information,—not valuable information only, but all information. He would ask in the same breath the price of a horse and its name ; he would follow up a question on an abstruse point of geology or astronomy by an inquiry as to the relative heights of two unconnected individuals ; and the answers to every question were laid side by side in his mind, comprehensively classed together under the head of so much information. His mother was homely and unrefined ; but she had more sense and observation than her son, and a goodness of heart with which it was impossible not to be pleased. For her

habit of narration also, often tedious and pointless as it was, there was this great excuse to be made, that it had been acquired, and necessarily fixed, during the long course of years in which she had been engaged in bestowing information on her son. They were both, however, considered in the light of companions, rather serious trials to a pre-occupied and wandering mind.

"Did you make a long journey to-day?" asked Mr. Hervey of Ernest, as they sat down to dinner.

"Yes; I came from London."

"What do you suppose to be the exact distance from here to London?"

"I don't know. I suppose between eighty and ninety miles."

"You came by the railroad, of course?"

"Oh yes, of course," Ernest said, smiling.

"And I dare say you came in five or six hours. Wonderful! wonderful!" sighed old Mrs. Hervey. "I don't know how it may be, I hope there is no harm in it; but I sometimes do think it never was intended that men should fly through the air as they do

now-a-days. When first I came to this part of the country,—we came on a visit to old Mr. Hargrave, at the Woods,—it 's fifty years ago—I was a girl of eighteen—we were three days in coming from London. The first night we slept at Henley-on-Thames, my father was knocked up even then ; but he was an invalid, to be sure ; and the second night we slept—where did we sleep, Edward?—how strange, that I should forget ! I know there was a waiter with a spotty face ; for my mother, who was always nervous about infection, said, ‘ I wonder if he has got the small-pox.’ But, however, that is no matter now : and the third night we arrived at the Woods.”

Such is a specimen of the conversation with which Mr. and Mrs. Hervey entertained their guest during dinner and the early part of the evening. Ernest exerted himself, however, to attend, to control his thoughts during some thrice-repeated narrations from Mrs. Hervey, and to bear patiently his curate's more tedious interrogatories ; and he was at length rewarded for his endeavours

by the sudden raising of a subject which possessed a strange attraction for him, and which a distaste to prying and gossip, joined to some other mysterious feelings, had alone prevented him from introducing.

“What do you suppose to be the prevailing style of architecture in which Clare Abbey is built?” inquired Mr. Hervey.

It was the first time that his former home had been mentioned, Mrs. Hervey, with more tact than her son, leaving the subject for Ernest to introduce or not at his pleasure; but the quietness with which he now entered upon the discussion convinced her that her abstinence (a very painful one) had been needless; and she joyfully seized upon a topic on which her tongue had been “itching” to expatiate.

“Are you acquainted with Lord and Lady Vere, Mr. De Grey?” she asked, when the architecture had been discussed, and her son was satisfied.

“Not at all,” he replied.

“You are not singular in that respect,” remarked Mr. Hervey.

“Edward is quite right,” rejoined his mother. “Nobody can be said to know them. I don’t know how it is ; we have dined at Clare Abbey—how many times, Edward ?—three times, I think, in three years, and Lady Vere has called here as many times, perhaps ; but I don’t know how it is, we don’t know them ; and everybody about here says the same thing Lord Vere is never seen. Indeed, Mr. De Grey, you will have hard work : if he comes to church half a dozen times a year, it is all he does do. I hope I’m saying nothing unkind, Edward ; but Mr. De Grey will have eyes as well as we have, and the truth is the truth. Lady Vere was not much better a year or two ago ; but Mr. St. Maur, they say, persuades her to be more regular ; and we shall see her to-morrow, as he is at home, I don’t doubt.”

“Did you ever see the young St. Maurs ?” inquired Mr. Hervey.

“Not unless, as I suppose, I met them riding this afternoon.”

“If you met young people riding, Mr. De Grey, there’s no doubt that you met the

young St. Maurs. When Mr. St. Maur is at home, he and his sister are always together riding and walking. Mr. St. Maur is at Oxford at present (that is, not at present; you understand, Mr. De Grey, vacation time); and he remains there a year longer, I believe. He is remarkably clever as we hear, and they say he is to come into Parliament in a year or so, and altogether he looks very high. It is a sad pity that he is so haughty, for there's no doubt but he is a well-disposed young man; but that's the way with genius in this world. There's not a soul hereabouts that he thinks fit to associate with. Edward would be very happy to be a companion when he's not too busy, but if he meets him in his walks or his rides, Mr. St. Maur bows and asks him how he does, and there's an end of it;—and the young lady never leaves her brother when he is at home; and when he's not at home nobody knows what becomes of her. She leads a sad dull life, poor thing, and she feels it I'm sure she does; but she's a sweet pretty creature,—is'nt she, Mr. De Grey?"

“Very pretty,” he replied quietly; but he coloured slightly as he spoke, for a quiet “very pretty” was *not* what he had thought her.

“What a strange thing a family likeness is!” remarked Mr. Hervey.

“Ah! Edward, you say that because you think Miss St. Maur so like her brother; but I don’t see it. For my part I had rather have one like Miss St. Maur, than twenty such as that proud young gentleman. It’s a shame for me to say so, I, Edward’s mother too, for Mr. St. Maur is far more hopeful and religious, than his sister; but then she’s young, Mr. De Grey, and she’s a sweet pretty creature, and that’s the truth; and when she smiles, I could kiss her a hundred times over. I never see her, but I think of a cousin of my own, dead and gone these thirty years; sweet Amy Mills! She was just such another sweet thoughtless thing; there was no seriousness in her! but she fell ill before she was twenty, and she bore a long painful illness with the patience of a young saint as she was; and when she died,

for she died in her early youth, she looked so lovely, that there was one who said she was not a dead child of earth, but a sleeping angel of heaven. And I've often seen it; such is the end of those wild sweet heedless things. But you are not going, Mr. De Grey; it's early yet."

"What is the exact hour by your watch," inquired Mr. Hervey.

"Nearly ten o'clock; and I have a good deal to arrange to-night."

"Do you suppose that your time is perfectly correct by London time?"

With some difficulty, Ernest extricated himself from the offered society of Mr. Hervey, and walked thoughtfully home alone.

CHAPTER VIII.

There is in souls a sympathy with sounds,
Some chord in unison with what we hear
Is touched within us, and the heart replies.
. wherever I have heard
A kindred melody, the scene recurs,
And with it all its pleasures and its pains ;
Such comprehensive views the spirit takes
That in a few short moments I retrace
The windings of my way through many years.

COWPER.

THE family at Clare Abbey, were assembled at the breakfast table, on the following morning. Lord and Lady Vere sate opposite each other ; one side of the table was empty ; on the other side, Camilla St. Maur sate, as she always chose to do, by her brother. Though there might be some few points of similarity, nothing could be more dissimilar than the general character, and common habits of these two, and yet the affection subsisting between them,

was of that close and devoted kind, which is sometimes said to be peculiar to twins, but which probably only needs some similarity of age, and the days of childhood passed together. This affection and union was the stronger, because in their home, they were thrown entirely upon each other for companionship, meeting with little attention from one parent, and finding little sympathy in the other.

Lady Vere's character may, I hope, be tolerably well guessed, from the few words she has already spoken. She was very beautiful, at forty still beautiful, an utter want of thought and sensation preserving to her all the smoothness and freshness of youth. Besides this uncommon beauty, she had little to attract, for her only other marked qualities, were indolence and folly. She was, however, a patient and forbearing wife, and though an injudicious, or rather an unthinking, yet in her way, was an affectionate mother. She was proud of her son, and had reason to be so, and treated his opinions with deference: to her daughter she

allowed (except on a few points, where some strict rules of her own youth, chiefly of bodily restraint, were remembered and enforced) unlimited indulgence, and if there was no sympathy, there was no want of harmony.

Lord Vere's character had more expression. Lady Vere always called him, "My love," but he looked very unlike anybody's love,—most of all unlike hers. He was a tall, thin, dry-looking man, whose features once had been, nay still were, handsome; but were disfigured by an expression of mingled sourness and discontent, sternness and melancholy. His character in early youth had not been without promise; resembling, in many of its features, the proud aspiring nature which now characterized his son; but his son's ambition was of a lofty and generous kind, his own had been simply selfish. It might possibly have been turned to good; success, that salutary medicine to many minds, might have enlarged and purified it; but it was disappointed, and it shrank into the recesses of his spirit, and turned to sourness.

Many trials await the pride of those who at once court and despise their fellows. Lord Vere suffered much, but struggled on till a blow was struck which raised his pride and withered his ambition. He came into Parliament; and if his heart could ever have been said to glow, at that time it glowed,—not with the noblest passion, the desire of being an instrument of good, yet with a not ignoble one, the desire of fame. He determined to make a figure, to earn a name: a question arose on which he felt some interest; he took advantage of it; he devoted himself to the study of the subject, made himself master of it; at length rose to speak: spoke,—and *failed*. His manner was hard and dry, his arguments, though plausible, false,—and words and manner both alike were tinged, and more than tinged, with the only youthful fault which produces harsh and malicious criticism,—arrogance. His speech, his argument, nay he himself, was turned into ridicule, not only by his opponents in the heat of the moment, but by many of the leading papers of the day. Stung to the

quick, too proud to retort, too scornful to explain, he withdrew into himself, and abjured friends, foes, and political life for ever. His father's death shortly afterwards changing his condition, he retired into the country and lived on his own property the life of a recluse. So ended his dream of ambition ; ever afterwards all generous sentiments, all lofty aspirations, if expressed in his presence, were crushed with a cold sneer of scorn.

His second dream was of love ; and from love his second disappointment came. It might have been said, his friends had often said, that love was a passion which could find no place in his heart ; but human nature is strangely inconsistent, for ever escaping from the rules with which we endeavour to trammel it ; and so Lord Vere, inconsistent as it was with his previous habits and openly expressed opinions, was betrayed, not only into a romantic passion, but into a foolish and romantic marriage. He was some years more than thirty, when he was ordered to Buxton for his health ; he there saw, admired, and

voluntarily made acquaintance with a young lady of no fortune and no family, but whose beauty was of a remarkable and dazzling kind. Perhaps the extreme languor and softness of her voice and manner were soothing to the hardened nature of the man, who fancied himself injured by his kind: however this might be, he married her after a short acquaintance; and so extreme was his love and devotion, that it was many months before he became aware that the lips of his beautiful wife were incapable of uttering anything but the most intolerable folly—and that she was still more incapable of comprehending the fervour of that affection, which, overcoming all barriers from within and from without, had prevailed to make her his wife. Such a discovery once made, is made for ever,—the illusion which casts a spell over folly, once dispersed, returns no more. For the second time Lord Vere withdrew into himself, and the spark of unselfish feeling which might yet have kindled the dormant energies of his nature, appeared to be extinguished. Henceforward

he lived to himself only,—and the life with his own dry self was dreary and uninspiring indeed. In vain the beauty, the infantile charms, the youthful grace of his daughter—in vain the talents and promise of his son—he took no heed of them; and if it was with an effort that pride and affection were sometimes restrained, it was not apparently so. He was not an unkind father; though cold and repulsive in manner, in action he was rather indulgent than otherwise. Except on such points as interfered with his determined plan of seclusion, he never thwarted their wishes, or their will; but a wish thwarted with an expression of interest is worth, a thousand times over, a careless acquiescence in our desires,—and so his children felt.

“You have got a letter, Reginald,” exclaimed Camilla, laying her hand on one which her brother put down beside him; “where does it come from? May I read it—pray let me read it?”

In some houses letters are even too plentiful; but a letter was a rare sight at Clare Abbey.

"It will not interest you, my dear Camilla."

"Oh! yes it will; everything interests me that interests you; and besides, I like to hear of things that happen in some other world than this. Now, let me read it—*pray* do," and she put her hand on his arm.

He gave her the letter.

"What is it all about?" she cried, looking up with a puzzled look; "I can't understand it! What have you been doing,—and what has made a sensation, as the man says?"

"I told you, Camilla, it would not interest you," Reginald said, smiling, and he held out his hand.

"But it does interest me, and I will understand it. Now take your hand away, for I mean to make it out. Now I begin to see; you have been making a speech, and your friend says that it has been so much admired, that Somebody Somebody—I wish he wrote a little better—calls you Demosthenes. Oh! Reginald, when did you speak; and why didn't you tell me?"

"My dear Camilla," he said, with a look of annoyance, "I wish you would not make such a fuss. We occasionally meet to speak, to practice speaking at Oxford; and one night, there was some rather good speaking, that was all."

"I thought people only made speeches in Parliament," remarked Lady Vere.

"Oh, mamma, don't you remember Colonel Ashby's speech at Salisbury, last week, which they said lasted two hours?"

"Yes, to be sure; I wonder what it was all about. What did you speak about, Reginald?"

"It was a mere question for the purpose of debate, mother; it was of no importance."

"What was the subject?" asked Lord Vere, shortly and suddenly, — looking up from the newspaper.

Reginald coloured, but replied in the respectful tone in which he always addressed both his parents,

"The question that was proposed was on the subject of ambition; whether greatness was or was not desirable simply for itself?"

“And what might your sage opinion be?”

“I said that to rise was in itself an object for ambition;” and his eyes flashed as he spoke.

His father turned to the newspaper with a slight scoffing laugh; but Camilla exclaimed,

“Right, Reginald, right; who were the dull, stupid people who could think otherwise?”

“They were not dull or stupid,” he said, gravely; “and though for some reasons my speech was the most applauded, *I* know that there was no comparison between mine and that of the person who answered me. He did not convince me,” he added, with a slight sigh; “but I felt that his words were better, and wiser too.”

“Applauded! Reginald!” exclaimed his sister, eagerly; “were you cheered?—oh! if I had but been there.”

“Talking of speaking,” said Lady Vere, in her languid voice, “Mitford tells me that we shall have a new preacher to-day. Shall you go to church, my love?”

“My love” took no notice of the question. She turned to her son, and repeated it.

“Yes, mother, certainly.”

“I think I shall go, because Mitford has trimmed my new bonnet,—a sort of white fancy straw, with blue marabout feathers; it’s exceedingly pretty. What shall you wear, Camilla?”

“The same as usual, mamma,” she replied, carelessly; “I didn’t know that we need dress for Mr. De Grey.”

Reginald glanced at her: her disrespectful manner to her mother was the subject of his constant but unavailing remonstrance.

“Now, my dear Reginald,” she said, always distressed by his displeasure, though rarely amended by it, “can you say that there is any necessity for a new bonnet because a new clergyman happens to come to our dull church?”

He shook his head with a slight grave smile, but said nothing.

“Do you know, Reginald,” she added, suddenly, “from what Mitford was telling

mamma last night, I think our very civil friend must have been Mr. De Grey."

"Do you think it was?" he asked, with interest in his manner.

"I am sure it must have been; because Mitford says when she went down to buy some ribbon she saw him arrive, and when she came back, about half an hour afterwards, she saw the same person walking in our direction. I hope it was; I liked his looks, didn't you, Reginald?"

"I really hardly observed him, Camilla,—I was thinking of you;" and he looked at her with one of the sweet fond smiles which brightened and softened his proud beauty.

"*I* thought you were very short to him," she said, laughing; "I liked his looks, not the least like a clergyman; how different to that poor, wretched Mr. Hervey. I don't know if mamma was not right, and that he would have been worth a new bonnet after all;" and she looked mischievously up in her brother's grave face as she spoke.

He shook his head again, but indulgently, as at a pretty naughty child whose wilful

ways are too winning for anger, and left the breakfast-table.

Untamed and unrestrained, Camilla St. Maur had grown to be a woman; a few strict rules laid upon her body, forming the only yoke of her education. Unless when emancipated by her brother's presence, her body was a slave to the precincts of the Abbey; for Lady Vere had strict ideas as to what a young lady should, and should not do: but no such restraint was imposed on her mind. She had had one or two foolish governesses; but folly exerts no authority, or if it exerts, fails to obtain it; and so her mind had grown in unfettered freedom, with few principles to guide her, and those few caught from her brother's example, or springing up naturally in a mind as fruitful in flowers as in weeds. She spent what she chose; did what she chose; read what she chose; learned what she chose, or wasted her time as she chose,—and so at sixteen and a half, she was nothing but as Mrs. Hervey said, “a wild, sweet, heedless thing,” surpassingly lovely, quick in apprehension,

vivid in imagination ; yet all these good things wasting their sweetness from want of culture.

Strange, unspeakably strange, were the feelings of Ernest De Grey as he stood in the pulpit of the village church, and prepared to address his parishioners for the first time. The voices of the school-children were singing the hundredth psalm, the favourite of his childish fancy ; and as the sounds fell upon his ear (the same discordant tones from the old grinding organ, the same unsoftened, unmusical notes from the children), memory transported him from the spot on which he now stood, and once more placed him a child by his mother's side, and once more he gazed upon the old organ as the wonder of the world, and the twang of the children fell pleasantly upon his ear. A sudden failure in the organ, such as he remembered in the olden time, aroused him from this first backward flight of his fancy ; and there came a remembrance of the hour in his boyish life, when the idea first dawned upon his mind

that the music in Cranleigh church was not such a concord of sweet sounds as he had childishly imagined; and then, connected with this discovery, he almost smiled as he recalled the day when, in the independence of enlightened boyhood, he had left his mother's side, and had chosen for himself a prominent and luxurious position in the large curtained roomy pew, which of all the deformities of Cranleigh church was the most unsightly and the most indefensible. Led away by this recollection, he involuntarily turned his eyes upon the interior of the pew, until this moment hidden from his sight, and there, in his boyhood's chosen seat, stood Camilla St. Maur, the vision of the preceding evening. A bright slanting gleam of sunshine was falling upon her, encircling her fairy figure, her airy dress, making her laughing eyes to sparkle, and her hair to shine like threads of gold. It was too lovely a vision for such a time, and almost

“The preacher in his parting prayer
Shut his dark eyes, and warn'd men to beware
Of beauty.”

These trains of thought are long in description, but they passed through the mind swifter than the arrow from the bow. The last verse of the psalm was singing, when Ernest stood up in the pulpit and looked around him ; the verse concluded, and calm, grave, and composed, he began the words of the opening prayer, driving back with one strong resolute effort the feverish dreams of the past and the future into the recesses of his mind.

The discourse of the new rector of Cranleigh was not heard unmoved by his congregation. Many tears were shed by the poor, who have those outward signs of emotion ready at every call of sorrow and of joy ; and even in the less excitable hearts of the rich there were feelings unexpressed, inexpressible, whose only outward sign could have been tears. And this not because Ernest was a fine preacher—far from it. His sermon was short, his language simple and concise ; his manner serious, and no more. There was no kindling of the eloquence which, whatever may be its ultimate effect, for the moment

few can resist ; there was no fervour of religious feeling, no ardour of youthful zeal ; there was but that which goes straight and direct to the hearts of all men, young and old, rich and poor—*Truth*,—the plain and simple expression of natural feeling. He spoke of its being the first time on which he was called to address them—quietly, with a kind of restrained feeling, far more touching than its full expression ; he spoke of his former connection with them, and of the additional interest which that connection must give to his duties amongst them, and to his wishes for their welfare. He spoke of the awful responsibility that was laid upon his shoulders, and touchingly, as if he felt it in his heart, of his own weakness and unworthiness to bear it ; concluding with a short and earnest appeal to his flock, imploring them to make that burden less by their own attention to their duty, and by assisting him with their endeavours and their prayers.

If to such words be added the influence of a voice low and melodious, and of an appearance singularly prepossessing, few perhaps

will be disposed to wonder at the good resolutions made that day by many a youthful heart,—resolutions frail and fleeting as youth itself,—that neither look, nor word, nor deed of theirs should ever grieve the heart of him who had looked down upon them “as tenderly,” a young girl said, “as if he had been the father of them all.”

Reginald St. Maur sat during the sermon with his hand over his eyes. Once Camilla looked at him, and smiled—smiled as the young, ashamed of being touched are apt to do ; but he did not heed her. The interest with which he had early thought of Ernest De Grey had strengthened with his advancing years ; and that interest his present position amongst them, and his appearance and language that day, were further calculated to increase. There was that about him, in his manner and in his words—speaking of feeling and the conquest of feeling—a kind of “brave tenderness,” as it has been happily expressed, which went to Reginald’s heart ; and as he gazed on the youthful preacher,

and hung upon his words, he felt his spirit stirred with undefinable emotion.

At the conclusion of the service, when he had assisted to place his mother comfortably in the barouche, he drew back, saying he would walk home.

“Now, Reginald,” exclaimed Camilla, leaning out, and looking at him reproachfully, “what are you going to do? Why didn’t you tell me? I would a thousand times rather walk.”

He smiled, but made no answer, and desired the coachman to drive on. He stood in the churchyard, while the throng of villagers passed by, raising his hat to every bow, even to the curtsy of every little child, with the grave and distant courtesy which distinguished him,—speaking to none, familiar with none, but courteous to all. When all had departed, and he was left alone, he turned into the path which led from the porch of the church, and there waited till Ernest and Mr. Hervey appeared. He then went forward to meet them, and begging Mr. Hervey to introduce him, he held out his

hand to Ernest. His manner was not *cordial*, for the word cordiality implies a heartiness of welcome which was foreign to Reginald's nature; but there was in it a deep and respectful interest, far removed from the condescension usually characterizing the unbending of stateliness.

"I did not know you last night, Mr. De Grey, or I should have done more than thank you for your kindness to my sister."

"Neither did I know you," replied Ernest, smiling; "though, perhaps, I guessed who you might be."

They stood for a few moments in silence, a little awkwardness and constraint on both sides; but Reginald seemed determined to overcome it.

"If you are going home, Mr. De Grey," he began again, "perhaps you will let us go together as far as your house."

And together they set off: but little advance was made in acquaintance; for Mr. Hervey, feeling for once somewhat important, could not refrain from making an exhibition to Ernest of his intimacy with "the

proud young Lord," as Reginald was commonly called. It was a momentary ebullition of vanity, for usually he was humble enough; and, in fact, his pride in Reginald's notice was prompted by a better feeling than mere servile vanity: it was far rather the unconscious homage paid to a character above the common level of humanity; and Mr. Hervey was but one among many by whom this homage was paid.

"I hope Lady Vere and Miss St. Maur are quite well," he began, as they walked along.

"Quite well, thank you," Reginald replied, with cold civility.

"I suppose they came to church in the barouche, as usual?"

"Yes. My mother is not a great walker."

"What do you take to be the distance from here to Clare Abbey?"

"I don't know," Reginald said, coldly. He was annoyed at the mention of the name. Those whose minds are fixed on one particular event in the life of others, are apt to fancy a power to wound in allusions which the most interested do not even remark.

"I suppose it is rather more than a mile by the road," Ernest said, indifferently.

"Mr. De Grey is better acquainted with the country than either you or I," was Mr. Hervey's next opportune remark.

Reginald coloured, and they walked on in silence till they came in sight of the parsonage.

He then stopped; and after shaking hands with distant civility with Mr. Hervey, turned to Ernest, and, colouring again, said, hesitatingly :

"I hope to see you again soon, Mr. De Grey, and my mother and sister also wish to make your acquaintance. May we expect, if it is not disagreeable to you, to see you at . . . at home?"

"May I call at *Clare Abbey* to-morrow?" Ernest said, with a slight smile and a slight emphasis on the words.

Reginald smiled also, and held out his hand. Each understood perfectly the feelings and the meaning of the other. All awkwardness vanished between them; the awkwardness on Ernest's side, of fearing to

remind of what he once had been ; on Reginald's side, of seeming to patronize him who had once stood in his position. It was such an understanding as could never have been given by the comparatively shackled language of the tongue.

"I don't know how it is, mother," said Mr. Hervey, throwing himself with some vexation, though without a spark of resentment, into a chair, in the little drawing-room of their cottage ; "I don't know how it is, but that young St. Maur seems to take more to Mr. De Grey in this one day, than he has to me in the whole three years that we have been acquainted with him ? "

"It is but natural, Edward," said Mrs. Hervey, consolingly ; continuing, with some observation, "you know, as one may say, there is something between them that binds them together. One stands in the other's place ; just so, I remember, when your sister, Mary, and Anne Morrisson, poor girl, were both in love with Alfred, and didn't know for the life of them which he liked

best. They were always clinging together, as if, though they said nothing about it, there was something that joined them ; and so it is with these young men. And what did you think of Mr. De Grey's sermon, my dear ? ”

“ It was very good, mother. What do you suppose the length of it to have been ? ”

“ Oh, I don't know. It made me feel all up and down, and I didn't think of the length. I am sure, though, that it was not long, for I could have listened for another hour with pleasure. And how sweetly pretty Miss St. Maur looked to-day. I don't know what young men are made of now-a-days ; they're not a bit what I remember. In my young days we should have had them falling down and worshipping such a sweet, sprightly blossom as that ; and now you are all taken up with Mr. St. Maur, and not a word of that young flower. However, no doubt, it's as well as it is,” she added, with a nod of her head and a look of recollection.

CHAPTER IX.

Mad, natural graces, that extinguish art.

KING HENRY THE SIXTH.

Words uttered from the heart, find their way to the heart.
Character is power.—CECIL'S REMAINS.

ERNEST still felt as in a state of previous existence while passing along the corridor, and entering the drawing-room at Clare Abbey, in which so many happy hours had, in former days, been passed. All was precisely as he had left it: the same pictures hung against the walls; the same china ornamented the marble slabs; though it all looked bright and fresh, it was the same patterned chintz, with its well-remembered bunches, that covered the furniture; and the furniture itself stood in precisely the same forms in which it had been left by Mrs. De Grey. Most people have a fancy of their

own as to the arrangement of their rooms ; and even if they come to the perfection of comfort, make some little change to mark their own individuality ; but Lady Vere had no thoughts ; and if she had found her drawing-room arranged after the approved fashion of houses “ to let,” with a round table in the middle, and a sofa against the wall, it is probable she would have been perfectly satisfied with it. To complete the illusion, in the same place, on the same sofa to which ill-health had for many years confined his mother, Lady Vere was indolently reclining. One object only spoke not of the past ; and as his eyes, dreamily wandering around, rested on that one, it was sufficient, as once before it had been, to drive him from dreams of the past to still more dream-like thoughts of the future. That one object was Camilla St. Maur, who was seated at the piano-forte, at the farther end of the room.

Lady Vere half rose as Ernest approached her, bowed her beautiful eyelids rather than her head, and, without speaking, occupied herself for the next few moments in placing

her feet on a footstool, and arranging a cushion for her back. Camilla came hastily forward, and with the unconscious grace and fearless self-possession which is often the effect of a retired education, held out her hand to him, saying, with a bright smile and a bright blush, "*We* are not strangers, Mr. De Grey."

It has been said, that her beauty was very perfect and regular ; but the impression left by her beauty was not that of a perfect and regular kind ; it was rather that which is expressed by such words as "interesting," and "fascinating." Its peculiar charm seemed to consist in its rapid changes and strong contrasts ; all blending into one harmonious whole, but keeping the attention constantly alive, forcing you to watch her countenance, that you might trace what inward feeling it was which in one instant banished her colour and banished her smiles ; or, on the contrary, lit up its melancholy beauty into the sparkling loveliness of a child. She was prettily dressed this day in a light muslin gown, ornamented with sea-green ribbons ; her long curls loosely turned up, and falling

from the back of her head. Ernest, an admirer by instinct of all that was beautiful in art or in nature, thought he never yet had seen in all the world of beauty an object so exquisitely lovely as the young creature before him.

She sat down, slightly moved a chair towards him, and went on.

"I told mamma of our meeting the other night, and how nearly you made our acquaintance under very unpleasant circumstances."

"Yes, Camilla told me she had almost had a fall," said Lady Vere, settling herself comfortably in a slanting posture; "it would have been very disagreeable. I am glad you were there."

"Not that you were of any use, Mr. De Grey," Camilla said, shaking her head. "I can't allow you to think you were."

"I assure you, I did not think so," Ernest replied, smiling; and he scarcely wondered at finding himself at once on a footing of perfect intimacy with those who, as strangers, had occupied so much of his thoughts,

so careless and unconscious was the ease of the young girl.

"What a hot day it is," remarked Lady Vere.

"The sun is hot, but there is a cold wind."

"Did you walk all the way from Cranleigh? You must be very tired."

Ernest smiled.

Camilla said, "You are a great walker, I am sure, Mr. De Grey."

"Why do you think so?" he asked, smiling; "not because I have walked from Cranleigh?"

"O no! I think nothing of that myself; but I am sure you are given to long solitary rambles. You could not stay quietly at home on Saturday to arrange your things, as you ought to have done, but you must set off and walk for I don't know how many hours on your first evening."

"It was *my things* which drove me out," he said, laughing. "I could hardly find a place even to put my hat upon. If you know the wretched desolate look of a new,

disarranged house, you will not wonder at my escaping from it as fast as I could."

"I don't know anything about it; and I am sure I should like it if I did. I am sure I should like a change, even to be uncomfortable. We never once have moved since first we came to this *dull, stupid, tedious* place; and I don't care how soon a change comes." She spoke the words with emphasis.

Ernest involuntarily coloured, and looked annoyed. Was it really thus: the home over which his own heart was yearning—was it but dull and stupid to those who were the envied possessors of it?

Camilla saw his look, reproached herself for her thoughtlessness; and, moving her chair nearer to him, said, blushing deeply, and bending forward, "Now, I should not have said that to *you*. I am very sorry."

"Pray, don't be sorry! there is no need. Pray, don't think that you have annoyed me," Ernest said, angry with himself, and feeling—but it would be difficult to describe

exactly what he did feel towards her at that moment.

“What did you say, Camilla?” asked Lady Vere.

“Something, as usual, that I ought not to have said,” she replied. Then jumping up, she rang the bell, saying, “I quite forgot to send for Reginald. He told me to let him know if Mr. De Grey called.”

“Where is Reginald?”

“Reading in his room, mamma. I went and rattled at the door a little while ago, but he would not notice me. He fastens his door to keep me out,” she went on, turning to Ernest, “for five or six hours a day; he says he can’t read if I am there. Isn’t it very hard?”

The thought that passed through Ernest’s mind would, if expressed, have taken the form of a vapid compliment,—and he was no complimenter; so he only laughed, and said nothing.

“You have no sister to worry you at your studies, have you, Mr. De Grey?”

“No. If my studies don’t get on as well

as they should, I have nobody to blame but myself."

"But they do get on very well, I suppose? Reginald says,—but here is Reginald."

"Mr. De Grey is here, my dear Reginald," remarked Lady Vere. "Camilla sent to tell you."

Camilla got up, and drew a chair for her brother between herself and Ernest. He thanked her with a smile, and sat down; but the ease of the visit was gone. Camilla left her brother to speak; and he, anxious as he was to make Ernest feel at home, and unrestrained, had not the gift of easy conversation, which his sister possessed. Long pauses ensued, and the intervals were filled up by wise observations from Lady Vere, which seemed, in her son's presence, to be more utterly without point or meaning than before.

Ernest soon got up and took leave, and Reginald followed him. He took down his hat in the corridor, and, opening a side glass-door, led him into the garden. He then said—

“Another day, Mr. De Grey, I shall ask you to pay *me* a visit, and a longer one. But I know that your first visit to us must have been painful, and if my presence annoys you, and you would rather go through these well-known ways alone, only say so, and I shall not misunderstand you.”

Ernest's heart *was* full of many thoughts and many sensations, but they were not now thoughts of himself, or regretful mournings over the past; they were rather strange sweet feelings of gratitude and love for those who had shown such unbidden thoughtfulness and consideration for him. It took a moment to overcome a perhaps somewhat unmanly softness, which the combination of these new feelings, with the feelings natural to the spot where he stood, was tending to produce; and Reginald, fancying he was answered, turned away.

“Pray, don't think I wish to be alone!” Ernest said, recovering his bewildered senses; “I was silent only because I could not thank you for your kindness as I should wish to do. I will not deny,” he continued,

after a moment's thought, "that it was painful to me to come here to-day; I was very fond of this place, and I had not quite made up my mind to see it in other hands; but if I say this honestly, will you equally believe me when I say that it is painful no more."

They walked on together. Reginald suddenly said,

"I have thought so much of you, Mr. De Grey, all my life long."

"Have you?" Ernest said, with some surprise. "I have thought of you,—but then that was but natural."

"Have you thought of me as I have thought of you, *with envy*?" Reginald asked with a slight smile.

"With envy!—of me!" Poor Ernest had never been in the habit of contemplating his own destiny as one to be envied.

"You wonder that I should envy you," said his companion; "but it has always seemed to me that you were born to be great. . Beginning life with such a sacrifice, thrown entirely upon yourself, yours was a

destiny to create ambition, and to fulfil it." The eyes of the young man sparkled, and his colour rose as he spoke.

"And how do you think of me now?" asked Ernest, with some sadness in his tone.

Reginald was silent.

"Not with envy now?"

"I confess," Reginald said, after a short silence, "that when I first heard, three years ago, of the life you had chosen, I heard it with such wonder and regret, that I ceased to ask about you from old Mr. Temple, ceased to think of you as I had done. I was disappointed in you. I thought you had thrown your destiny away. But latterly, since I heard of your returning here, although I have ceased to envy, I have thought of you again."

"You despise the life I have . . ." Ernest hesitated before he said the word, but he did at last say it—"chosen."

"No, not despise," replied Reginald, gravely. "I respect, even admire, those who devote themselves to it. But then, it is a life open to all; it needs no peculiar

talents, it leads to no greatness ; it is a good path, a holy life, but it is not a life for the ambition of those who would rise high and do great and lofty deeds. I do not think it was the life which *you* should have chosen, Mr. De Grey."

Ernest had said the same to himself a hundred times ; his constant feeling was (though prompted by motives less high than those which animated his youthful companion), that he was "cabin'd, cribb'd, confined ;" but answers which we seek for in vain, to the questionings of our own discontented spirits, come at our call when those questionings fall from the lips of others. Arguments unthought of before now rose in Ernest's mind.

"I have often felt as you do," he said, thoughtfully, "but I suppose we are wrong in thinking so much of the greatness which is in the sight of men. Your ambition would be to influence on a large scale, to influence or lead your countrymen, to guide the destinies of nations. But if we consider the point seriously, and remember how nations

are made up of separate individuals, the life of a country clergyman, whose office is to lead to the highest virtue, say but five or six hundred ignorant human beings, is, in fact, as important, — as important in the fate even of nations, — as the more enlarged but less certain influence of a statesman. Should not we who are Christians think the greatest of all deeds, the highest as well as the holiest, to preach the faith which we profess? ”

“ If you were speaking of the life of a missionary, I could understand and agree with you,” Reginald replied. “ To convert the multitudes of the heathen, to be the first to plant the Cross on an idolatrous shore—I have dreamed of such a life myself,” he added, with a smile and a sparkling eye, “ but it is, not too high, but too holy for me.”

Ernest looked up at his companion, and while he gazed with strange feelings of admiration on his pure and lofty beauty, his heart was stirred and saddened, — stirred with vague, aspiring, ambitious dreams, and

saddened as he thought of the vows and chains of filial duty, which bound him to a life from which for the moment he recoiled with something of contempt. But he never yet had expressed to a human being, not even to his mother, the reluctance with which he had entered upon that life, and the struggles through which its duties were performed; and they were not expressed now. With a violent effort, quelling the rising discontent, he said, with a grave smile :

“ You must not make me discontented with my life; at any rate, for the present, my duties lie in England, and *here*; and lowly as those duties may be, even already I feel that they are higher than I can perform.”

Reginald made no answer, but walked thoughtfully on. Stopping at last, and turning suddenly round, he waved his hand over the landscape which lay stretched, and smiling, in the luxuriance of early autumn, before them, and said, musingly :

“ How strange the destinies of this world are, Mr. De Grey! I remember hearing,

when first we came here, that it had broken your heart to leave your home; and still I see that, however well and nobly you have borne the loss of your inheritance, and the change of life to which that loss has condemned you, your mind, and thoughts, and love are centred upon it still; and yet it is taken from you, and given to me—to whom it is *nothing*.”

“Is it really so?—Is it nothing to you?” Ernest said, sadly and wonderingly. Reginald was right; every flower of the field, every blade of grass that was trampled under his feet was dear to him. In some minds, the sense of local attachment is a passion strong as the attachments of human love; and his was one of these.

“I see and own its beauty,” Reginald replied; “I like it as my home; and if I were allowed to choose my home from all the world, I might probably choose this one; but still, it is nothing to me. My hopes are not here. The duties which may one day be mine,—important ones, I own, and which you, I feel, would so well have

performed,—are trifling and irksome to me. I long to be free and unshackled, to follow where my destiny would lead me,—free as you were, Mr. De Grey."

"It *is* strange," said Ernest, thoughtfully. After a moment, however, he continued, "But as we are bound to believe that the circumstances in which we are placed are, if we use them rightly, the best discipline for our minds, I think I can see, without much thought, the use which we should make of ours. You must learn to stoop, and I must learn to rise. Yours is the easiest task. A very short experience will teach you, that events and duties are not great and small in themselves, but in the motives that prompt, and the consequences that follow them. My task is harder—" he paused, and sighed; then added with a smile, though rather a melancholy one, "I believe I have been using my office and preaching to you; but I feel much more the need of your preaching to me."

They parted shortly after, and each went thoughtfully on his way.

A character like Reginald's had never crossed Ernest's path before. Had he met with such an one in earlier days, it is probable that he would have been less tied and bound with the chains of human feelings, and human infirmities than he now was; for his nature was impressible, needing but a spark to kindle its fire and animate it into exertion; but such characters as Reginald's are rare,—and more rare, I think, in men, at least at the present day, than in women. The cold outside,—the ambition burning and consuming within,—the indifference to all which the world calls good, and the eyes set on dreams in which the world perceives no beauty!—such are not, I think, met with more than once or twice in life; or if they are, it is under circumstances which, from position, command less attention; or from want of outward attractions, have less power to win admiration and love. If there were many like Reginald, with pure hearts and lofty dreams, with the prominence of position to win all eyes, and the seraphic beauty to fix them,

I do not know what this world might not be.

There is no subject of meditation so strange or, it might be said, so awful, as the consideration how one human being seems to be given into the power of another to be moulded at his will. Words at random spoken—good words and evil words—serious yet unintentional expressions of good feeling, and light sportive words of unintentional carelessness or irreverence—have had power to form a character, to direct a destiny for ever. We cannot open our mouths and be absolutely certain that our words will not sink deep into the heart of some man, woman, or child, who may be an unobserved or neglected bystander;—a single sentence has before now haunted a mind for ever. Such considerations give an awful responsibility to the power of speech; and yet how few think of this! even of the best, how few sufficiently consider it! Happy those who use their tongues as responsible instruments; and happy, too, those who from the truth and purity of the inward fountain do a good

work, and know it not. There are many, I hope and believe, of the latter sort. Neither Ernest nor Reginald were in the habit of considering their words in so solemn a light. In their conversation this day, each had but expressed his feelings as they rose in his mind, and yet the words which each had said, were carried away as new principles by the hearts of each. Ernest was animated, strengthened, and filled full of thoughts of a higher zeal; for a few hours the hopes of earth, earthly passions, earthly ties, seemed "like dust and dross to his eye," and he turned to his lowly duties with an ardent spirit, with fresh and vigorous resolution, and with glowing pictures of successful labour in his high calling. If this strength, and these higher hopes quickly faded, it was not the influence that faded,—*that* remained on his mind; it was the stronger influence of human feeling and human weakness which superseded without effacing them. On Reginald the effect of his companion's words was less felt, and less immediate; but an effect they had.

CHAPTER X.

In joyous youth, what soul has never known
Thought, feeling, taste, harmonious to its own?
Who hath not paused while beauty's pensive eye
Ask'd from his heart the homage of a sigh?
Who hath not own'd with rapture-smitten frame,
The power of grace, the magic of a name?

THE PLEASURES OF HOPE.

"My love," said Lady Vere, addressing her husband, who came one afternoon into the drawing-room, to look for a book, "Reginald wishes his new friend, Mr. De Grey, to dine here."

"As Reginald pleases," replied Lord Vere, coldly.

"Very well, then, my love, shall he come to-morrow?"

"As you please," he replied again, and taking up his book, was leaving the room. At the door, however, he turned round, and after a moment's thought, observed; "As

you have the rector, you may as well have the curate and his mother too; they have been due these six months."

"Very true, my love. Reginald shall write a note for me;" and she sank back on the sofa, and reposed till her son appeared.

"Reginald," she then said, "I want you to write a note for me; you must begin, 'Dear Mrs. Hervey,' and end—I forget how I end—Camilla will know. Ring the bell, if you please."

"What am I to say, mother?" Reginald asked, sitting down at the writing-table.

"I thought I told you; your father says they are to dine here as well as Mr. De Grey, — 'Dear Mrs. Hervey, will you dine with us to-morrow, and your son?' — you know about the hour;" and she closed her eyes, as if after the exertion of explanation.

Reginald looked excessively annoyed at his mother's communication; but he made no remark upon it.

"Camilla," Lady Vere began again, open-

ing her eyes as her daughter entered, "how do I end to Mrs. Hervey?"

"I'm sure I don't know, mamma," Camilla said carelessly. Meeting her brother's eye, she added, laughing, "I should think, 'yours truly' would do."

"Yes, that was it, Reginald," remarked Lady Vere in a satisfied tone; 'yours truly, Florinda Vere.' "

"It would be a good deal too much for me," Camilla observed, seating herself by her brother; "not that I dislike that poor old woman, either. Dining here! my dear, Reginald, are they going to dine here? that Mr. Hervey; *you* must talk to him—I can't; he is quite beyond my patience."

"I will talk, Camilla, since he must come."

"I really do pity the poor man," she continued; "it must be unpleasant to be such a bore. It is quite impossible that anybody ever did, or ever could, like him; and that seems a hard fate."

"His poor mother seems to like him," observed Lady Vere.

“His mother? yes, it would be hard indeed if she didn’t like him; but that must be all. His sisters can’t — I shouldn’t like you the least, Reginald, if you were like Mr. Hervey. It is a thing that often puzzles me; you now, my dear Reginald, who know everything, will you tell me what Mr. Hervey was made for? I am sure the world could manage to get on without him.”

“Everybody has their place,” said Reginald smiling; “and dull as you think Mr. Hervey, I dare say there are some things which he can do better than you.”

“Dull as *I* think him? now, my dear Reginald, I will not have all the blame put upon my shoulders. I am sure I say many more words to Mr. Hervey than you do; *I* am very civil and say a great many pretty things about the weather when we meet him—you, just say, ‘Good morning, Mr. Hervey,’ and bow as stately as a king.”

“I don’t want to have Mr. Hervey for a friend or companion—he does not suit me;

but I rather respect him, Camilla, than otherwise. He does well what he has to do, and seems contented and satisfied in what I should think a dull and tedious life."

"I am not sure that I particularly admire contentment," Camilla said, laughing, "but what are you writing now, Reginald? Mr. De Grey—is he to dine here too? oh! well, that is something better; mamma will talk to Mrs., you to Mr. Hervey, and I will have Mr. De Grey."

"What will you wear, Camilla?" asked her mother.

"Really, mamma, I have not thought."

"I think I shall wear my primrose silk, with pinked flounces."

"With *pink* flounces!" exclaimed Reginald, with an expression of astonishment and disgust.

"Yes," said his mother, raising herself on the sofa, pleased at his appearance of interest; "six pinked flounces; it came from Madame Elise."

Camilla, laughing, would not explain; and Reginald, after a look of wonder, but

unwilling to offend his mother by a further expression of dissatisfaction at a dress with which she was evidently so well pleased, sealed his letters and left the room.

The presence of Mr. Hervey, at the dinner-party at Clare Abbey, was rather an assistance than otherwise, especially after the ladies had left the dining-room; indeed if he had not been there, it seemed probable that total silence would have ensued. Reginald had little of what is called "small talk" — as minds absorbed in subjects of little interest to those about them rarely have; Ernest, though more conversable and with many more feelings of general sympathy, was naturally unassuming, required to be drawn out; and was, above all, extremely averse (no uncommon aversion) to being snubbed. Having therefore been three times snubbed by Lord Vere, he felt little inclined to make a further trial of his or of Lord Vere's forbearance. But Mr. Hervey, either more used to Lord Vere's manner, or less conscious of that which he had long been in the habit of receiving from

the world in general—or all such lower feelings being overcome by his desire for information on several points connected with the dining-room, talked placidly on, well satisfied if the desired information was gained. He wished to know the date of the building of the dining-room, which was evidently a modern addition to the house; the relative sizes of the drawing-room and dining-room, and the names of the grim-looking De Greys, who still hung in large oak frames against the walls of the apartment. As these subjects may not be of universal interest, we will pass them by, and follow the party into the drawing-room.

Lady Vere was, as usual, half-reclining, supported by cushions on the sofa; her primrose silk with pinked flounces, was extremely becoming to her fair fresh complexion and beautiful dark hair; and a stranger would have gazed at the young mother of her tall handsome son, with surprise and admiration. She was covered with lace, and her arms and fingers were bright with jewels—altogether forming a strange contrast to the

homely Mrs. Hervey, who, in a black gown and close white cap, sat by her side on the sofa. Lady Vere was perfectly happy; she never wanted conversation or amusement—but when it came to her, particularly in the form of narrative, which saved her the trouble of answers or comments, it was agreeable to her, and she sat listening to Mrs. Hervey's anecdotes of persons whose very existence was unknown to her, with a complacent smile.

At a little distance, Camilla was engaged in copying music. She was fond of dress in her way, but her mother had never succeeded in inspiring her with a love of finery. Nothing could be prettier or simpler than her toilette this evening, — nothing more graceful and interesting than her appearance, as she sat stooping over her music-book, her long bright curls carelessly streaming over her white shoulders, or resting on her beautifully-formed hand and arm.

She raised her head, and watched with a mingled expression of amusement and interest the arrangement of the party. Mr.

Hervey drew near—down went her head, and with singular care and attention she copied a few bars of her song. She had had him at dinner,—and endure him longer, she could not, and would not; besides, she had arranged it otherwise,—she wished to make more acquaintance with Mr. De Grey. He passed her by, and went to Lady Vere; whose complacent smile was more inviting. Camilla's attention to her music then slackened; and looking up, she observed her father take up a newspaper and seat himself for the evening, and Reginald and Ernest place themselves by the fire and enter into conversation. The conversation continued for some little time — no apparent recollection of her presence; she watched them for a few minutes, then shaking back her curls with a slight impatient petulant movement, she devoted herself again to her song. Though not by nature a student of the thoughts of others, Reginald always saw, and was indulgent to the feelings of his sister—and she had only written one or two bars before he and Ernest stood beside her.

“Mr. De Grey is fond of music, Camilla,” he said, laying his hand upon her shoulder ; “will you play?”

She looked up with a start. “Are you in a hurry, Reginald? If not, I would rather finish this song, which I have been trying to finish for three days.”

“Not at all,” he said, with a smile. Then turning away, went to relieve his mother, who was yawning under the exertion of answering Mr. Hervey’s questions. After a moment’s consideration, Ernest sat down on a chair which stood near them.

Camilla wrote a few words ; then rested. “Are you really fond of music, Mr. De Grey, or do you only say so?”

“I *really* am,” he replied, laughing ; “I always say what I think. But then I only am fond of it. I don’t understand it at all, and I very, very seldom hear it.”

“Why don’t you hear it, if you are fond of it?—that must be your fault.”

“Perhaps it is ; but it does not seem to come in my way ; especially of late years.”

“But everybody plays and sings — all

young ladies — as I suppose you call them, at least.”

“Do they?—I dare say they do; but my acquaintance with young ladies is very small. I know very few people of any kind,—and among these few, only three or four young ladies. Some of them sing and play as you say; and perhaps they all do, but I really don’t remember.”

“Why, Mr. De Grey,” and she put down her pen and looked at him, “I begin to think that you must be almost as stupid as myself.”

He laughed.

“I don’t know why you laugh,” she continued with a kind of sigh, “it does not seem to me a laughing matter. It is a great evil to be stupid; nobody should be so if they can help it; and a man *can* help it.”

“Do you think a man can do everything, he pleases?” Ernest inquired, smiling.

“If not absolutely everything, *almost* everything. He must be, at any rate, perfectly independent, and able to go where he pleases, at any moment he pleases. See how differ-

ent to my case. If you were to wish as I do, to go to London, or to the sea-side, or to see some of the beautiful Scotch lakes and mountains Walter Scott describes, you could set off to-morrow morning without any fuss, quite by yourself,—whereas I can only wish and wish and wish, as I have done all my life, and I dare say always shall. Oh! no, a man is a very enviable being, and I never pity a man for anything.”

“But a man must submit to circumstances, in the same way that you are forced to submit. Ever since I was ordained, and that is nearly three years ago, I have been a country clergyman in a very quiet village. If I had wished to move, I could not have moved, and if I had wished for society, I could have had very little except the society of the poor.”

Again she put down her pen and looked at him—this time with a look of profound pity. “Is this really true? Well then, I am sorry for you, though you are a man.”

“Don’t suppose that I am complaining of my life,” Ernest said with some anxiety;

"I was very far from meaning to do that—I only wished to apologize for my stupidity."

"But do you like your life?—do you never wish for anything else?" She waited, determined to have an answer.

"If I wish for anything," he replied after a moment's thought, "it is not for what is generally called society; I don't much care about that. In former days, I wished for adventures, and excitements, battles, and shipwrecks, and desert islands; and though I hope some of my wishes are a little wiser now, still I think something of those old tastes remain." She looked at him so eagerly and approvingly, that almost involuntarily he continued—"My first wish was to be a great general, a great conqueror, and I used to dream about it so much, that when I was told it could not be, I made myself very miserable. Then I used to think, that if I was not allowed to be great in a regular way, I should be satisfied to be a pirate, or a highwayman; and yet," he added with a smile, "after all my dreams, I find myself a quiet country clergyman."

"Oh! how exactly like me," Camilla exclaimed, laughing; "I never expected to hear anybody express just what I feel."

"Have you a great ambition to be a highwayman?" Ernest inquired playfully.

"You are laughing at me, which is very unfair when you are as bad yourself. But really I often have thought, that if I could be nothing else great or exciting, I should be a pirate. You don't know how dull it is here when Reginald is away—nobody can have any idea of it; so when I walk by myself, I amuse myself with wishing and fancying. First, I wish to be Henry the Fifth, or Montrose, or Bonaparte,—but that is quite useless! so then sometimes I wish to be Joan of Arc, or Queen Elizabeth, or even our own quiet Queen! And that is almost as useless, isn't it?" she added, laughing.

"Camilla! Mrs. Hervey, says she would like to hear you play," broke in her mother's drawling voice.

"Directly, mamma, only one or two bars more. Now, Mr. De Grey, it is your fault

that I have been so long—why did you talk of such exciting things?”

When the song was finished, she went to the pianoforte and began to play. She played well, with both taste and execution; but Ernest, in common with a large part of the world, preferred singing to playing, and was disappointed. As she finished one piece of music, and was looking for another, he asked her if she ever sang.

“Do you like singing better than playing?” she looked up and inquired. Seeing he hesitated. “You need not mind saying so, for I do sing as well as play in a sort of way.”

“Well then, I do like it best.”

“I am glad, for I like it best myself, and I sing a good deal when I am alone; but I never thought you would like singing best.”

“Why?” Ernest inquired with surprise.

“Because Reginald does not. He is really fond of music, and understands it; and sometimes he makes me play to him for hours together, while he sits there in the

window thinking ; but he never likes me to sing to him. He says my songs disturb him—and you are rather like Reginald, I think.”

Ernest shook his head with a faint blush of humiliation at the bare idea. “I am afraid that is not true. I wish it was ; except,” he added more lightly, “on this one point ; I am sure I should like your singing.”

“I only sing common English things,” Camilla said ; “I can’t manage fine music at all.” She took down a few songs from a music-stand, and as she looked them over continued, blushing slightly as she spoke, “I must tell you the reason why, Reginald does not like my songs. If I could find Odes to Mr. Pitt or Mr. Canning, or if I could sing fine sacred music, I dare say he would like it very well ; but my songs are chiefly what are called love-songs, and he says they are nothing but trash. Now perhaps you will change your mind, and object to my singing as he does ?”

“I don’t see why love-songs should necessarily be trash,” Ernest said, glancing at one or two that lay before him. “Some are so,

certainly ; but I have sometimes heard such pretty ones, that I should very much like to hear them again."

" Well, then, I will sing you one. I like them myself. You know it depends a good deal on people's feelings. Reginald thinks them trash, in the same way as he thinks most novels are trash, because his mind does not turn on such follies as love at all. Not that *I* am sentimental either," she continued, looking up with a fearless smile, " quite the contrary ; and I often wonder why it is I like them. I don't the least care about such things in general ; but people are inconsistent. I don't know the reason why, but I do like these songs ; and the more melancholy they are, the better I like them. Here is one, however, that is not melancholy : I must not begin with a melancholy one. This is from a gentleman to a lady ; and afterwards," she added, laughingly, " I will sing you a very melancholy one from a poor forsaken lady to a gentleman."

She sang a verse or two from one of the simplest and prettiest of love-songs :

“ Oh ! if thou wert my own love,
How I would cherish thee ;
Thine image, in my heart of hearts,
Its talisman should be.
And joys that now ideal seem
Should make my life one sunny dream.

“ Oh ! if thou wert my own love,
I could not fail to prove,
From thy sweet converse day by day,
More worthy of thy love.
And I would live for thee alone,
Beloved, if thou wert mine own.”

Her voice was not a powerful one ; but it was sweet and bird-like, with some pretty low tones, and her heart was in her voice. Better—that is, more critical—judges than Ernest would have been pleased with her singing. That he *was* pleased might be gathered from the kind of musing attention with which he listened ; but when she ceased he said nothing.

She waited for a few moments, playing the last bars carelessly over. As he did not speak even then, she said, a little impatiently,

“ Do you dislike the song, Mr. De Grey ? ”

He started from his reverie. "Dislike! I am only sorry that it is so soon over."

"I am glad you like it. But, now, you must like this one still better,—at least, I like it better myself. It is one of Mrs. Arkwright's, and I fancy such a melancholy story in it."

"And will she love thee as well as I?

Will she do for thee what I have done?

See all the pomps of the world pass by,

And look only to thee, beloved one."

Her changeful countenance became sad and subdued as she sang, but not less lovely; and when this was done, Ernest asked for another, and still another; and, seating himself at a little distance, he seemed to abandon himself to such thoughts and feelings as the music excited.

His enjoyment (for though he felt rather sad than otherwise, enjoyment it was) was interrupted by Reginald.

"My dear Camilla," he said, as he approached her, in a slight tone of remonstrance, "what are you singing?"

"Mr. De Grey likes these songs," she said,

in explanation. Turning to him with an appealing, animated countenance. "I did not force my trash upon you, did I?"

He smiled his answer as he stood by the pianoforte.

"I will have you speak," she exclaimed, "or Reginald will hardly believe me. You *must* tell him you like the songs."

"I really do, very much," he said, emphatically.

"Then, I suppose, I must not call them trash any more," Reginald remarked, with a glance at Ernest; "but I confess, if I do not call them so, it will be difficult to me not to think them so."

Mr. Hervey at this moment approached, and seized on Camilla to make a few inquiries concerning her songs, and music in general; and, although he was perfectly aware that she could not have done so, to ascertain whether or not she had been fortunate enough to hear Jenny Lind.

Ernest turned to Reginald, and said,—
"These songs are the expression of very common feelings, and very common events

in life ; and the expression appears to me to be, for the most part, very simple and very natural. Why, then, should they be called trash ? Have you no sympathy with such feelings as these ?”

“ I hardly know,” he said. “ I have not thought much upon the subject. But are you quite right in saying that these songs express *natural* feeling ? It appears otherwise to me. Take this one, for instance ;” and, turning over a song, he read the following lines :

‘ Hopes that now beguiling leave me,
Joys that lie in slumber cold ;
All would wake, if thou couldst give me
One dear smile like those of old.’

“ Is this natural ?— Is it not forced and exaggerated ?”

Ernest shook his head with a slight, thoughtful smile.

“ I don’t know what you will think of me, if I say so ; but I must confess I *can* quite conceive the state of mind under which such words and feelings would be perfectly natural.”

"I see we are very different, Mr. De Grey," Reginald said, contemplating his companion with a look of some curiosity.

"Have you among your songs, Miss St. Maur, an extremely pretty song, called 'We may be happy yet?'" inquired Mr. Hervey; but before he could be satisfied on the point, Lady Vere called her daughter.

"Camilla, Mrs. Hervey wants to go," she said, making her communication as concisely as possible.

"Pray, don't let me disturb you, Miss St. Maur," said Mrs. Hervey; "but it's past half-past ten o'clock, and our Jane will hardly be able to keep her eyes open."

Lord Vere had lent his coach for the accommodation of Mrs. Hervey, and a few minutes afterwards Ernest found himself seated by her side, and hearing, though he scarcely listened to, the remarks of his uncongenial companions on the party they had left.

"How wonderfully well Lady Vere has worn," said Mr. Hervey. "I should hardly suppose her to be above six-and-twenty."

“And she must be as near to forty as I am to seventy, Edward, and that is but a few months. How the time runs away ! It seems but a day since I was down at Mr. Hargrave’s at the Woods.”

“Nothing can be more pleasing than Lady Vere’s manners when she exerts herself. I am sorry, mother, that you don’t see more of her.”

“It’s as well as it is, Edward. Lady Vere is too fine for me, and I am too homely for her. She smiles very sweetly when I speak ; but, somehow, I don’t fancy that she understands or cares for what I say. It’s very well for once and away, and I’m sure I feel obliged to Lord and Lady Vere for asking us ; but, as to conversation, I would as soon talk to our Jane ;” and she slightly yawned as she spoke.

“I think young St. Maur improves,” continued her son. “He was exceedingly civil to-night, and I begin to think we shall get on better. Mr. St. Maur has many good points ; don’t you think so, Mr. De Grey ?”

“He has indeed many,” Ernest said, as quietly as he could.

“There is more in him than in his sister ; though, perhaps, her manners are the most generally pleasing of the two. Young St. Maur will, I have no doubt, make a figure in the world. What his sister will be, I am afraid, is doubtful. We had more conversation to-day at dinner than I ever remember to have had before, and I confess I was a little startled at her sentiments. She appears to be rather thoughtless on some important points. Did you find her agreeable, Mr. De Grey?”

“Very,” he said calmly, though he felt much inclined to toss his curate out of the carriage window.

“I inquired what she thought of your sermon on Sunday morning, and she made me rather a singular answer. She said that she had liked it, and had listened to it for once and away ; but that she could not say she liked sermons in general. And I am much afraid she spoke the truth ; for I have often observed her careless way at church.”

“Oh ! Edward, don’t be severe,” said his mother. “To my mind, she is as sweet a

young lady as ever I saw. And how like a young bird's her voice is! I only know it's well I'm not a young man like you and Mr. De Grey; for I should be half beside myself if she smiled upon me." She paused, then added, with a sigh, "I don't know how it is, but that likeness runs strangely in my head. While she was singing to-night, she looked the very picture of sweet Amy Mills. I mentioned Amy Mills to you, didn't I, Mr. De Grey? It's a sad thing to think that death or sorrow must blight those bright young creatures, but so it is; and yet, perhaps, we should not grieve. Sorrow has brought many a wandering sheep back to the fold. Well, Mr. De Grey, your house stands first—here we are. Good night."

CHAPTER XI.

It pleases me to bear what you call pain,
Therefore to me 'tis pleasure. Joy and grief
Are the will's creatures.

THE SAINT'S TRAGEDY.

Bien que le caractère de son esprit fût l'enthousiasme, il ne savait se passionner que pour ce qui n'était plus ; ses espérances mêmes n'était que des souvenirs.—LASCARIS.

UNEVENTFUL and apparently unexciting times are not always uninteresting. It is hoped,—but it is a hope much mixed with fear,—that they will not be so in this case ; for it is necessary to pass through many months after Ernest's re-establishment at Cranleigh, and yet in those months no event took place.

It was a month after the dinner at Clare Abbey, and the day before Reginald St. Maur's return to Oxford. Camilla stood at her brother's door, fastened, as usual, to prevent intrusion, and petitioned for admit-

tance. Her voice was a shade less gay than was common ; there was even a touch of sadness in it, and Reginald could not resist her.

He unfastened the door with a smile, but when he had closed it again, he returned to his seat, and sat down before a large book open on his writing-table, with an air of pre-occupation and abstraction.

There was character in Reginald's room ; all who had studied his disposition, saw Reginald in its arrangements. It looked comfortable, for it looked inhabited, and the windows were all open, and the air flew in freshly and sunnily ; but there was nothing of ease or luxury,—not so much as a couch or an arm-chair to be seen. The tables were covered with books,—not light, comfortable-looking books, but volumes, whose grave and severe exteriors proclaimed that as little ease was allowed to the mind as to the body. Over the fireplace hung a long print of Mr. Pitt ; and on the marble slab beneath it stood four small busts,—Frederick, of Prussia ; William the Third, of

England ; Lord Strafford ; and the present Emperor of Russia. Other prints and busts ornamented different parts of the room ; characters of celebrated men of various ages, various destinies, various dispositions. But the whole selection, whatever their variety, were classed together by one unfailing characteristic — *indomitable will*.

Camilla approached her brother, and stood beside him.

“Are you reading Greek, my dear Reginald, all by yourself? How I pity you! What is the book?”

“Aristotle’s ‘Ethics.’”

“Aristotle must have been a great man to have such a great pupil as Alexander the Great ; but I can’t say these ‘Ethics’ look very attractive. What dirty pages, and what close bewildering lines ! And have you been sitting here poring over this, instead of going out this lovely morning? My dear Reginald, I do pity you !”

“Not poring over it much, I am afraid,” he said, with a sigh ; “I should have been, but I have been thinking instead.”

"I am glad of that; for then I don't mind interrupting you. You know, Reginald, I wish you to be great, and so when I disturb your reading, my conscience often troubles me; but thinking never made anybody great, did it?"

"Not my kind of thinking, at any rate," Reginald said, and he smiled. "But is anything the matter, Camilla?—do you want me?"

"I only want to tell you how miserable I am," she said, sadly, "or rather, how miserable I shall be to-morrow when you are gone. I have been so happy, so very happy. My dear Reginald, what *is* to become of me now?"

"It will only be for two months, Camilla. Two months are soon over."

"Soon over when you are at home, I know,—too soon; but when you are away, the months are years. No, not years, that is not half enough,—they are centuries. I only wish I once could make you feel what this place is when you are away! Nobody speaks to me from morning till night; and

the only change is a walk in the tedious garden, or a drive in the more tedious barouche. I often wish I was a child again, and had a governess and lessons."

"It must be dull, I know," Reginald said, kindly; "but I hope it will not always be so. And, Camilla, why not be so much of a child again as to try to learn? You are not so wise but that you might learn something."

"I would, if it was of any use; but I cannot see that a woman does any good by making herself clever. Poor, wretched women! try as they may, they can do nothing unless they happen to be born queens. I wish I were a queen."

Reginald smiled. Arguing with his sister he knew was in vain; and, to say the truth, her opinion was in a great degree his own also.

"But to return to what I was saying," she continued; "I am so sorry, so very sorry, that you are going, and what makes it worse is, that you are glad to go. Now tell me truly, Reginald; you are not sorry, are you?"

"I am sorry to leave you, Camilla," and he put his arm affectionately round her waist; "you know I am. But in other ways you are right. I am glad to move; I am glad to think that time is passing, and the future approaching. Only one more term at Oxford . . . and then . . ." And a look of intense thought passed over his brow.

"And then . . . what?"

"And then . . ." and his colour rose, and the shadow of thought deepened, "the time comes when I must learn whether the dreams I have dreamed are to be dreams only."

Camilla watched his countenance for a moment; then drawing a chair from another part of the room, she sat down opposite to him, resting her arms upon the table.

"What are your dreams, Reginald?" she asked, with interest in her tone.

"I hardly know myself;" and he shook his head, with a smile. "Sometimes they are clear and bright, and I understand them; but sometimes they are misty and vague, and so they have been to-day."

"There is one thing I want very much to know, though, perhaps, you will be angry with me for asking you. But, do you think you shall ever marry?"

"No," he replied, rather hastily, "I don't think I ever shall."

"I knew very well what you would say, and I don't think I very much wonder at you; but I am sorry. I often dream of your wife, Reginald; I should be so fond of her."

"Perhaps not," he said, with a slight smile; "I am afraid she would be too grave for you."

"No. If she were grave, it would be a pleasant gravity, like yours; not severe and disagreeable. But Reginald, I wanted to speak seriously. Do you know, I really think you ought to marry, for my sake and yours. For mine especially. I know I am not at all what you wish me to be; and how can I, when I never have seen a really nice woman? I cannot wish to be like any woman I ever saw. And then, besides,—my dull life, you really ought to take compassion upon me. Sometimes I feel that I shall

either do something very wrong, or else go mad."

"But, Camilla, you would not wish me to marry this moment, or this year; and perhaps in a year or two your own position may be changed. Would not that do as well?"

"You mean, I might marry; but no, Reginald, that would not do at all. I should be afraid to marry at present, while I am so discontented and changeable, because how could I tell that I should not be discontented and changeable afterwards? and that would be horrible. I am afraid you will be angry with me for saying so, but I want a little freedom first. I *cannot* be tied down to anybody just at present;—and so we come back to your wife. You must marry a wife to give me freedom, and to give you just that little bit more indulgence which I think you want. Now tell me, Reginald, is there really no chance?—have you quite made a vow not to marry?"

"No, indeed, Camilla, that would be a foolish and presumptuous thing to do at my

age. I only feel that I do not wish to marry, and I hope that I shall never feel otherwise."

"But have you considered the subject; have you been thinking about it?"

"I have been thinking a great deal about my future life since Ernest De Grey came, and the question of marriage did arise among other questions."

"Well?" Camilla said, eagerly.

"I have nothing to tell you, Camilla; your curiosity is quite wasted. Ernest De Grey was speaking one day of his early days, and his happy home, and somehow the conversation changed, and we spoke of our future hopes and dreams of happiness; and he drew a picture of domestic happiness, which I could not but own was bright and beautiful; and it drove me to consider as I had never considered before, and to ask myself, as I had never asked before, what the *reality* of my future life should be."

"Well?" Camilla said again.

"Well, Camilla, and I do not think, after serious thought, that such pictures of happi-

ness, however beautiful, are compatible with my old, my best, my cherished dreams. No," he continued, and his colour deepened, and his voice took a tone of excitement, "they may be bright, they may be good, —but let them go, they are not for me. I feel as if a steep path was set before me, and that such thoughts are but temptations to draw my eyes away. They shall not do it."

"But, Reginald," his sister said, thoughtfully, "do you know I sometimes think your idea of greatness is too dry. I don't like the greatness that despises common feelings. I never could care about Brutus or Cato. What I like is a young hero who can get above himself for the sake of being great, but who is not cold and dry, and, in short, a monster. You used to like my favourites, Alexander the Great, and Charles the Twelfth, and Henry the Fifth, but I am afraid you scorn them now."

He shook his head, with a smile, but there was a look of melancholy and abstraction on his brow.

“What *are* you thinking of, Reginald?” she said, anxiously.

“Your words make me think, Camilla, for you have spoken all the vague thoughts that have been drawing me from my duty this morning. I used to know what I wished; the very thought of greatness made my blood boil; but now I find myself asking where are the deeds of those who have left so great a name? and I cannot answer myself.”

“This comes of talking so much to Mr. De Grey,” Camilla said, impatiently. “I knew how it would be. I dare say he will end by making you a clergyman; or, if not that, at least as severe as he is himself.”

“Severe!” exclaimed Reginald, his abstraction vanishing as he looked with surprise at his sister; “do you call Ernest De Grey severe?”

“Not severe, like a cross old school-master,” she said, laughing. “I don’t mean that, but I know what I mean. He is full of severe notions, and fancies, and ideas that I don’t like at all, and I am very sorry

to think that he should put them into your head."

Reginald made no answer; he was meditating again, and he smoothed the pages of his book, as if he were preparing to begin his studies.

"Oh! Reginald," said his sister, drawing it from before him, "no Greek to-day, pray, pray. See how fine it is! Do let us go out."

He hesitated for a moment, then closed the book and went to the window.

"Well, Camilla, it shall be as you please to-day. You shall not think of me as severe when I am gone."

"My dear Reginald, *you* cannot be severe, — *you* cannot be anything that displeases me. Even if you were to become a clergyman, I suppose I should get to like it in time. Don't try me, though," she added quickly and laughingly; "you had better not."

He looked at her for a moment, and seemed to be on the point of asking some question of interest, but, apparently, he changed his intention, for the only obser-

vation that was made aloud, was a desire that she should put on her bonnet and meet him in the garden.

“And where shall we go to, Reginald?” she inquired as she joined him.

“Shall we go and ask Ernest De Grey to ride with us this afternoon?”

“Always Ernest De Grey!” she said, playfully.

“Do you object to it, Camilla? I will not ask it if you do.”

“Object to it? Oh dear, no. I meant to have proposed it myself; but you should have left it to me. I shall be jealous if you think of nothing but Mr. De Grey.”

“What do you suppose to be the amount of Mr. De Grey’s annual income, mother?” This question was asked by Mr. Hervey, as he sat in the window of his mother’s little drawing-room, an hour or two later in the same day.

“None know better than yourself, Edward; five hundred a year, or little more; and one hundred pounds of that he gives to you.”

“I was speaking of his private income, mother.”

“There’s not much of that, Edward, if all tales be true. I suppose you’re wondering, like the rest of them, where his charities are to come from? It’s a pity, to be sure, that he should encourage the idle; but they say he has not the heart to refuse if any come in his mother’s name; and he’ll be wiser in time. For my part, I like to see him talking so pleasantly to the poor: what is it the poet says—‘a heart open as day to melting charity.’”

“No, mother, I was only wondering if such a marriage would be acceptable to Lord and Lady Vere.”

“What marriage, Edward?” and Mrs. Hervey took off her spectacles to listen.

“Miss St. Maur and Mr. De Grey, mother. They say that must be the end of it, before long.”

“No, no, Edward! no thought of that.”

“I don’t know, mother; young St. Maur is never satisfied unless Mr. De Grey is with him, and Miss St. Maur is always with her

brother. It is a dangerous position, to say the least."

"And why dangerous, Edward? If it should be so, I should say there was a Providence in it. But I doubt it—I doubt it! there's no love there."

"Come here, mother, and look at them!" exclaimed Mr. Hervey, pulling the blind a little aside, as the three passed along the road together. "What do you say now? see how Miss St. Maur leans across her brother to talk to Mr. De Grey! and see how he watches her countenance!"

Mrs. Hervey joined her son at the window, and put on her spectacles again to examine the group. "Well, Edward," she said, when she had followed them till they were out of sight, "I believe you are right, as far as Mr. De Grey is concerned. He seems to worship the very ground she treads on; and no wonder, sweet, sprightly creature as she is! But it's all on his side: there's no care or heartache in her young face."

"What do you take to be the exact

symptoms of love, mother?" inquired Mr. Harvey.

"Nothing so frank and free as that young lady is, Edward; no, no! depend upon it there's no love there. Mr. De Grey is another thing. Poor young man!—and is he to be disappointed again? What a world it is!" and she shook her head, and sat down again to her work.

Such was Mrs. Hervey's judgment of the effects of the intimacy between Camilla and Ernest De Grey.

A windy night, which had disturbed some slates on the roof of Cranleigh Church, had revived in Ernest's mind his old project of improvement and restoration; and when sought for on this morning by his two young companions, he was found seated on a bank opposite the church with drawing materials about him.

Camilla approached him with her usual careless frankness and winning cordiality. "What a very, very long time it takes to discover people's merits," she said. "We

have known you now for nearly two months, and we have never found out that you were an artist."

"My merits lie so deep, that it takes time to discover them," Ernest replied, laughing; "and none lie deeper than my merits as an artist."

"That is for us to decide. I should like to see your drawing; may I look at it?"

"I was doing it for you to see," he said, as he put it into her hand. "I was trying to express upon paper some ideas I have about the church. Don't you think it a very pretty church?"

"Is it pretty?—yes, I suppose it is; but I never thought so before. I don't think I easily find out beauties in things I see every day; but I do think your drawing pretty, very pretty! Look, Reginald, are not these windows prettily done? I think you are much too humble, Mr. De Grey: I call this very artist-like, and it makes me wish I could draw."

"I am afraid an artist would say otherwise; but I am quite satisfied with your good

opinion. Though I was doing it for you and your brother, however, it was not for the sake of your admiration : I wished to interest you in a plan which once, long ago, occupied much of my thoughts. Perhaps you have not thought about it ; but if you do think, you will see how spoiled the church is, inside and out, by the strange additions that have been made to it. And I have discovered, since I have been here, that partly from these very additions, and partly from increase of population, the church is much too small. There is now neither room nor beauty ; but in this way,"—and he pointed to his drawing—"with these few alterations, the beauty might be restored, and sufficient room would be given. Do you think you understand my plan ?"

Camilla had listened to him civilly, but indifferently, and now, shaking her head, said, "No, nor ever should ; plans always make my head ache. But it does not matter, for I know nothing about such things. You had much better talk to Reginald ; and that you may talk in peace, I will go on to Mrs.

Pope's, and buy a bit of ribbon for my bonnet." She was turning away, but suddenly stopped. "Are you disappointed?" she said kindly, struck by a look in Ernest's countenance.

"A little," he replied, with a smile.

"Then I am sure I will stay, if you like. But you know I don't naturally care about such things. I should only be a hypocrite if I pretended I did."

"But you will, will you not? If you don't care about the beauty, don't you think it might be right to feel regret that so many of the poor people are shut out?"

"Right—O yes! I dare say it is right. I only mean to say that I don't care naturally; and besides," she added with a half smile and a half sigh, "I had better say the truth,—I don't think I very much wish to care. Such thoughts only make people look grave, as you and Reginald do. But never mind me now; talk to Reginald, and I will listen, and understand if I can." She seated herself upon the bank as she spoke.

With an effort Ernest endeavoured to

arouse his flagging interest, and turned to Reginald with his plan ; but he was doomed again to disappointment, not this time from indifference, but from want of harmony in opinion. Among those minds which rise above the average mediocrity, two extremes are often to be found,—those who find *perfection* in the past, and those who seek *perfection* in the future. A perfect character is formed from the union of the two ; for however contrary their apparent tendencies may be, each standing alone ends in narrowness and prejudice, inconsideration, and want of sympathy. No circumstances or discussions are too small to prevent the collision of such opposite dispositions, and a student of character might have been amused at the growing warmth of the argument that followed, the shudder with which Ernest heard Reginald's sweeping denunciations of the old edifice, and the scorn with which Reginald turned from Ernest's lowly and simple propositions. *To restore* this was Ernest's only desire, and by restoration to beautify. Before Reginald's eyes, with the first mention

of the plan, a fair and noble structure began to rise, which made the suggestions of his companion appear mean and low.

Camilla, rather amused than interested, listened with a smile; at last she rose from her seat, and put an end to the discussion.

“It is no use for you to talk any more, you never will agree. Poor Reginald cannot like anything that is not perfect; and as to you, Mr. De Grey, though you talk of improvement, it seems to me that you are unwilling to part even with the faults.”

“Have I been very obstinate?” Ernest said, colouring slightly, as the consciousness came that he had been so. “I am afraid I have; but I don’t think you can have any idea of what I feel about this old church. Perhaps it is foolish; but I don’t think any degree of beauty would repay me for the loss of its present self.”

“I dare say I am too fastidious,” Reginald said, thoughtfully; “give me the plan, Ernest, and I will think about it; and when I have thought, I suppose other considerations should

come." But when he took the plan, it was evidently without interest.

"I hope you forgive me for my obstinacy?" Ernest inquired, with a smile.

"You need not say that, Mr. De Grey; Reginald likes people to be obstinate, in which I agree with him. I think people who have no opinions of their own are worth just nothing. But, now, if we have done with our grave conversations, will you come with me to buy my ribbon? I must have it this morning, for this will be my last walk to Cranleigh for weeks and weeks to come."

They set off together to the little shop of the Cranleigh milliner, passing Mrs. Herve's windows as they went. Camilla's remark had cast a shade upon Ernest's brow.

"You are very thoughtful to-day, Mr. De Grey," she remarked, after they had walked a little way in silence. "I am afraid you are still grieving over the poor old church."

"No, indeed!" and he shook his head. "I had forgotten it. If I was thoughtful, I was thinking of what you said; and I am

afraid I was wishing that there was no such place as Oxford in the world."

"So do I," she said, bending eagerly across her brother, "with all my heart; and I am very glad to find that I am not the only person who can indulge in foolish wishes. Now, I suppose," laughing a little, "that, as usual, I have said something rather uncivil; but, I assure you, *I* do not think the wishes foolish, and that I hope will excuse me."

This was the moment when Mrs. Hervey fitted the spectacles on her nose, preparatory for her look of intense observation.

They reached the little shop, and stood before the gay window.

"Which shall I have?" Camilla said, inspecting the ribbons hanging tastefully and temptingly before her. "I am not bent on any one in particular; I wish somebody would choose for me. What colour do you like best, Mr. De Grey?"

"Blue," he said, without hesitation.

"You *are* decided indeed; that comes, I suppose, from being so obstinate. I wish

I could make up my mind as quickly ; but I only know that I don't like blue. What shall I have, Reginald ?—what do you advise ?”

“ Blue,” he said, smiling.

“ I know you don't like blue ; I believe you only say it out of compliment to Mr. De Grey ; and as I don't want to pay any compliments to anybody, I shall not take your advice. I think I shall have that pretty sober brown ; will you wait for me ? I will not be a moment.” And she went into the shop.

“ Will you ride with us this afternoon, Ernest ? ” Reginald inquired, when they were left alone.

“ I should like it.” Ernest paused, with a little hesitation ; then added, “ But would your sister wish it this last day ? ”

“ And is my sister only to be considered ? ” Reginald observed, with one of his slight, grave, meaning smiles. “ If it gives *me* pleasure to have you with us, may I not say so ? ”

“ Thank you a thousand times, now and always,” Ernest said, warmly ; “ but I think

it is but natural to suppose that your sister would prefer to have you all to herself to-day."

"We will ask her. Camilla," and he laid his hand on her arm as she left the shop, "Ernest De Grey has scruples about accepting my invitation, and on your account. He thinks," and he smiled as he spoke, "that you will wish to keep the enjoyment of my society all to yourself."

"Oh! Mr. De Grey," she said, going towards him with her sweet cordial manner, and raising her lovely face to his, "how very good-natured you are to think of me! but I assure you, Reginald will break his heart if you refuse, and *I* like whatever *he* likes; and if that is not quite civil enough," she continued, one of the faint, swift blushes that were perpetually coming and going, flitting over her cheek, "I like you to come myself."

"Then I will say no more, except to thank you," and his looks thanked her very earnestly, "and hurry away now, that I may be conscientiously at liberty afterwards."

"You must just stay to see my ribbon,"

she said, laughingly, as he was turning away. "You see I have bought the blue, after all ; and, unless I tell you the reason why, you may perhaps take it as a compliment when you see it on my bonnet. But the reason is, that there was not enough of the brown, and that all the others looked too ugly when I saw them near."

He smiled, and shook his head to disclaim most sincerely the expectation of a compliment, and thoughtfully hastened away to his daily attendance at the village school ; but, while his lips, eyes, and ears were engaged with his little scholars, the spirit which should have animated those outward organs was gazing on another sight, and hanging on other words, and framing far other sounds.

And this was now his constant state of mind, and the danger that assailed him was a danger greater than the danger of disappointed affection, in so far as the fear of a failure in duty is greater than the fear of a loss of happiness.

Ernest had arrived at Cranleigh with a very solemn sense of responsibility, and a

very sincere desire to do his utmost for the temporal and eternal welfare of his parishioners. That *utmost* which he set before him was, no doubt, open to criticism,—his standard of right was not sufficiently high, his idea of his duties not sufficiently enlarged ; but still, in all sincerity, that which he *saw* to be his duty he determined to perform. Before the idea of sincerity duties are ever opening ; and the sense of responsibility, once thoroughly admitted, is a sense that cannot be satisfied. So, had nothing intervened between him and his serious thoughts, it is probable that his mind would have shortly opened to higher desires and holier purposes. But almost before he had thoroughly considered what his new duties were—before he could fully realise the conviction that some hundreds of human beings were hanging on him, on his words, and his example for warning, instruction, and comfort, he fell into such a sweet, bright dream of bliss, as bore him away from the present, and steeped his senses in Elysium.

It is not good that a new state of life

should be begun in excitement. When the habits are formed, the map of life well laid out, a temporary excitement has its advantages, for it tends to stir up the sluggishness, and disperse the clouds of selfishness,—temptations too apt to intrude on regular habits and a quiet life; but to enter on a new existence, to learn new duties, to undertake new responsibilities, while the mind is diverted by turmoil, and half-dissipated in excitement, is destructive not only to the happiness of the life so begun, but often to the minds of those who thus begin it. And thus it was that Ernest's new life began:—his first two months at Cranleigh were passed as one long summer day.

The danger is, of course, greater when the temptation comes in the form of good, when the excitement appears to be of a high and useful kind; and this, too, added to Ernest's peril. Had it been Camilla's society only which so powerfully attracted him, he would have been on his guard. His mind was so true, his sense of duty so simple and sincere, that no enchantment of her presence

could possibly have deceived him as to the waste of time and thought into which she beguiled him ; but the attraction of Reginald's society was, in its kind, as great as Camilla's, and that there could be aught but good in yielding to the influence of him whose lofty dreams made the cares and simple duties of life look poor,—this was a danger which even a mind more meditative and experienced than Ernest's might have failed to discover.

So he yielded himself, without thought or fear of evil, to a new-born happiness,—to the sweet companionship which touched his heart, and kindled his fancy, and awoke the loftiest feelings of his nature. So happily the days went by,—thoughtlessly, yet too full of thought,—joyful, yet with a joy so full, that it was almost unfelt,—ennobled with visions of ideal virtue and heroism,—which yet were but dreams.

CHAPTER XII.

' "I do not know what your opinion may be, Mrs. Weston," said Mr. Knightly, "of this great intimacy between Emma and Harriet Smith; but I think it a bad thing."—EMMA.

"I THINK I shall take a drive to-day, Camilla," Lady Vere remarked one morning to her daughter, about a fortnight after Reginald's departure.

Camilla was sitting listlessly in the window: a book was in her hands; but her eyes and thoughts were idly wandering in search of that which in vain she sought to find—amusement and excitement. The more than usual happiness of her brother's visit,—a happiness to which, although without a thought of love on her side, or suspicion of it on his, Ernest's society had very naturally added,—had left her more lonely and melancholy even than usual. The expression

on her countenance was one of mingled sadness and ill-humour.

She replied to her mother's communication without much interest, or very much respect; for, as the day never came when the drive did *not* take place, the announcement appeared to her a needless one.

"I shall order the carriage at half-past two," continued Lady Vere, "as I mean to drive to Carrington."

"Where, mamma?"

"To Carrington, Camilla. Mitford says a rich man has bought the place, and she says I ought to call."

"Who is the rich man, mamma? I never heard anything about it."

"Neither did I till last night. When Mitford was curling my hair, she told me a great deal. She says he *was* a merchant, but now he is not; and his name is Vincent—Mr. and Mrs. Vincent; and she says everybody is calling; and she says I ought to call."

Though Lady Vere had a peculiar and rather enviable art of communicating much

in few words, this had been a long story, and she was exhausted after it.

Camilla drew up her head a little stately, and there was a little ill-humour still in her words.

“Six miles there and six miles back is rather a long way to go for a merchant, I think. I can fancy Mr. and Mrs. Vincent, the merchant and merchantess! We may be sure, at any rate, that they are dull, or they would not have come to settle in this dull country.”

“Mitford says I should call, so I think I had better call,” was Lady Vere’s languid reply. With more energy she went on:—
“And she thinks I had better call to-day, because of my *velour epingle*. I have only worn it once, so that it is almost as good as new; and she likes me to visit in a new bonnet. Have you got anything you can wear, Camilla?”

“Oh yes, mamma; I think I shall be able to dress myself for Mr. and Mrs. Vincent.”

“There’s a young lady, too; and Mitford

says she thinks you will like to make her acquaintance."

"Why does Mitford say that?" Camilla replied, petulantly. "She knows, or else she ought to know, that I hate young ladies."

"Do you indeed, Camilla? Dear, how strange!"

"That is to say, I *fancy* I do," Camilla corrected herself, laughingly; "for, as Mr. De Grey says, my acquaintance with young ladies is small. But I was born with a horror of the word; and I am sure I hated the Miss Colmans, and the Miss Dennisons, and the Miss Burtons that my governesses used to rave about. If one could meet with Die Vernon or poor Sybil, that would be another thing."

"Who are they?" inquired Lady Vere.

"Only in books, mamma; but people in books are *much* nicer than people in real life."

"Are they, indeed? I used to know a great many young ladies at Bath, and I liked them very much."

"What did they talk about?" asked Camilla, with curiosity.

“Oh, they used to tell me with whom they danced, and where they got their bonnets; and once I told them that I was going to be married, and they were extremely surprised.”

“That is just what I thought, mamma; and the Miss Colmans talked in just the same way. However, I don’t much mind going to see this Miss Vincent. Perhaps I may like her, after all.”

“Mitford thinks you will, because, she says, she hears she is pretty.”

“Mitford knows nothing about it, mamma. But certainly, after the sight of Mrs. Hervey yesterday, one may perhaps like to see something young and pretty.” And, with a little expectation of pleasure, Camilla prepared for the visit.

On arriving at Carrington, the expectation grew stronger. Camilla had by no means lost her admiration of new places, and a pretty wooded approach to the house excited her envy and admiration. Several times she rose in the barouche to look about her, and each time, in an agony of earnestness, Lady

Vere implored her to be still, for the sake of her dress.

“Really, mamma,” she exclaimed, as they drove to the entrance, with a colonnade before it, “if this is to be the end of being a merchant, I have no objection to be a merchant myself.”

Mrs. Vincent was at home, and Mr., Mrs., and Miss Vincent were all in the drawing-room, prepared for the reception of visitors.

They may be rapidly described.

Mr. Vincent looked vulgar, and was so, and was either unconscious of it or indifferent about it. Mrs. Vincent was rather handsome, and looked less vulgar, but was more so; for she was conscious of it, and endeavoured to conceal it. Miss Vincent was very handsome indeed, with bright eyes, a brilliant complexion, and a quantity of dark hair. Her appearance, too, was very different to that of her father and mother. She looked what, perhaps, is most concisely expressed by the word “fashionable,”—notwithstanding (or perhaps, having used the word “fashionable,” the word “notwithstand-

ing" is out of place) she was, could her heart have been searched, more thoroughly vulgar in its true sense than any other member of her family. It was, however, the deeply-rooted, not the apparent vulgarity.

A great fuss was made with Lady Vere by Mr. and Mrs. Vincent, and she was pleased with it; though the flutter of receiving thanks and the exertion of answering questions somewhat overcame her.

She was a little puzzled also by a peculiar habit for which Mr. Vincent was remarkable, —a habit, namely, of asking a question, receiving an answer, and repeating the answer he received in the form of a question, or else of narration to some invisible auditor. She was once or twice put to the serious inconvenience of making a second response.

"It is a long drive, I understand, from here to Clare Abbey," said Mr. Vincent. "I am afraid we have given your ladyship a great deal of trouble."

"Oh dear, no, Mr. Vincent; it was no trouble; and the drive is exceedingly pretty."

"Your ladyship found the drive exceed-

ingly pretty?" he repeated, with a slight accent of interrogation.

"Oh dear, yes, exceedingly pretty," she returned, politely, but languidly.

"Your ladyship is, perhaps, in the habit of taking long drives?"

"Oh yes; we drive every day."

"Your ladyship drives every day?" in a slow, measured tone.

"Oh dear, yes; don't we, Camilla?" endeavouring to draw her daughter to her aid.

"This appears to be a most populous neighbourhood," remarked Mrs. Vincent. "I am sure we have every reason to be satisfied with our purchase. Sophia—my daughter, Sophia—was rather afraid of the country: she likes society, as all young people do, and her papa had prepared her to find it rather dull, especially at first; but, I assure you, we have only been here a week, and we have had visitors to luncheon every day."

"Dear, how strange!" exclaimed Lady Vere, opening her eyes. "We never see anybody at Clare Abbey."

"Your ladyship never sees anybody at

Clare Abbey?" repeated Mr. Vincent, with a strong mark of interrogation.

"No, indeed, we never do—do we, Camilla?" again appealing to her daughter.

"What, mamma?" replied Camilla, breaking off her more flowing conference with Miss Vincent.

But Lady Vere only yawned: a third repetition was beyond her powers.

Miss Vincent approached, and asked Lady Vere's leave to show Camilla the grounds about Carrington, as she appeared to admire them.

Lady Vere paused to reply, struck by the extreme tastefulness of Miss Vincent's dress. When she had surveyed her from head to foot, she returned to recollection, and very civilly gave the desired permission; and a few minutes afterwards they wandered out together.

"You are not at all accustomed to the country, then?" Camilla said, in answer to some remark of Miss Vincent's.

"No, not at all. I am a thorough cockney. Our only change from London used to be to

Brighton ; and that, you know, is a little London."

"Don't say 'you know' to me, Miss Vincent ; for I know nothing. I thought Brighton was a *sea-side* place."

"So it is," replied Miss Vincent, her manner losing the very slight shade of flattery which had tinged it, and assuming in its place a very slight shade of patronizing superiority ; "but such a favourite sea place, that houses can hardly be built fast enough. It is quite a large town now, and a very delightful town, too."

"Then I suppose you are accustomed to a great deal of society ? Do you go to a great many balls and plays ?"

"Not much to the play—once or twice a year ; but people don't go to the play now-a-days. There is the opera, you know : we hardly ever miss that ; and other nights there are balls, or concerts, or parties, or dinners. We always had something to do all the year round ; for there is as much society at Brighton, in its way, as there is in London."

“Well, Miss Vincent, I don’t know what you think, but I think that must have been rather too much.”

“One gets used to everything,” she replied. “I assure you, it is as strange to me to stay at home as it is to you to go out.”

“Then what will you do here? How dreadfully dull you will be.”

“I certainly feel it a little, but I am not entirely dependent on society; I draw pretty well, and I am very fond of reading, and music I like passionately. Besides, we have a large circle of acquaintance, and this neighbourhood seems a good one—when once we are settled and found out, I shall not be much afraid. I dare say we shall have the house always full, and I am told there is no society so agreeable as the society of a country house.”

“That must depend a good deal on what the society is,” Camilla said, with a slight nod of her head, “I would rather live in a desert than have to talk all day to people I don’t care about.”

“Oh! of course, Miss St. Maur, *cela va*

sans dire ; but we have a very agreeable, as well as a very numerous acquaintance. I know several authors, and composers, and poets."

"Do you really?" and Camilla looked at her with surprise and interest. "What are they like? are they like other people?"

"I dare say they are not like any of the neighbours about here," said Miss Vincent, with a slight laugh; "but still they are men."

"Did you ever see Sir Walter Scott? No, I beg your pardon," she added with a blush, "I ought not to ask that when you must be as young as I am."

"You may ask it, indeed, and I am very happy to tell you that I did see him once, and that he patted my head. I was a very little girl, but I remember it quite well; he looked so venerable."

"No, Miss Vincent, you don't mean to say that?" Camilla exclaimed, looking at her companion with profound veneration. "Now, I envy you for that more than for all your balls and parties."

"I do feel a little proud of it, certainly."

"Have you read all his novels?" Camilla inquired.

"Oh! yes, I had read them all before I was seventeen, and that I am sorry to say is seven years ago."

"So have I—but I read them over and over again because I like them so much."

"I like them very well," Miss Vincent replied, "but I have not time to read books more than once; it is difficult enough to keep pace with the books of the day."

"I like them better than the new novels; I don't so much care about stories of every day life; I like more excitement and adventures, and even fights and battles. Have you read the 'Last of the Barons?' I have just finished it, and I put that with Sir Walter Scott's."

"Yes, I read it when it came out. I read a good many novels, but it is not my favourite style of reading; I like poetry better."

"Well, I can't quite say that, but I like some poetry very much. I wonder whether we should agree; do you like Shakspeare?"

“No,” said Miss Vincent, hesitatingly, “I am afraid I must say I don’t. It is very fine I dare say, but it is not my style. I like something a little more intellectual.”

“I don’t know what you mean by intellectual, Miss Vincent,” exclaimed Camilla, kindling. “My brother, who is very clever indeed, says, he thinks Shakspeare must have had the greatest intellect of any man that ever lived.”

“Oh! yes, pray don’t think I mean to doubt his cleverness; it is all my own folly, I dare say. I only mean that it does not please me, I like something that goes deeper — more knowledge of the human heart.”

“What do you like, I wonder? Do you like Sir Walter Scott’s poems?”

“Not much; I like Byron best of all.”

“I am afraid we don’t agree at all. I read some of his poems last year, and I did not care about them. I expected to like them; I flew to the ‘Corsair’—but I was very much disappointed. I did not care about his gloomy characters. I liked the ‘Doge of

Venice,'—that fiery old Doge—but not many of the others."

"I don't care about the characters or the stories at all. What I like are the meditations and reflections; those I do read twice, or twenty times. Every day, almost, I read some of them."

"There we disagree again," Camilla said, laughing, "for I hate reflections. I am very sorry that we disagree so much."

"We shall soon agree, I have no doubt. Perhaps you don't quite understand what I mean by reflections. If you will come with me to my room, I will show you some of the pieces I have copied from Lord Byron, and Moore, and Tennyson, and other favourite poets. I have a great collection, and when you have seen it, I think you will begin to admire my style of poetry. You have seen all the prettiest part of the garden; will you come in?"

"I should like it very much, but it must be another day. Mamma is not very fond of long visits, and though I am sure this has not seemed a long one, I suppose we have

been out a good while. What a pretty place this is!" she exclaimed, pausing on the steps to admire; "it is a thousand times prettier than Clare Abbey."

"Oh! Miss St. Maur," Miss Vincent said, playfully, "I am afraid that is not a true compliment. I have heard that Clare Abbey is a very magnificent place."

"I don't think it is at all; but if it were, that would make no difference; one gets tired of a thing one sees every day of one's life—at least I do. I am sure I often wish I lived in some of the poor people's cottages—they look so bright and so picturesque; and still more in some of the farms—such a bustle seems to be going on! I often wish I were a farmer's daughter."

Miss Vincent laughingly took up the idea, and having a number of pretty things always at her fingers' ends, did not suffer the opportunity to pass without some slight and playful flattery.

Camilla smiled and blushed, and very amicably the new friends entered the drawing-room.

“What pleasant people,” remarked Lady Vere yawning, as they drove away; “but I wish they had not sent for cake, because I did not want it.”

“You should learn to resist, mamma, as I do.”

“My dear Camilla, it is not civil.”

“Did you like Mrs. Vincent, mamma?—did you find her agreeable?”

“I thought her very pleasant. Her gown was rather short—I saw her petticoat; and her stockings were a little coarse—but she was very pleasant. Miss Vincent looked exceedingly neat.”

“Neat, mamma? I called her smart,—rather too smart for me.”

“I thought she looked exceedingly nice,—and her sleeves were particularly pretty;—I shall tell Mitford about them. I hope you liked her, Camilla?—and then she may perhaps give me her pattern some day.”

“Yes, mamma, I think I did like her. She is *rather* a young lady, but not so bad. Yes, I did like her, and she seems to know

everything; I am sure she will amuse me very much."

The visit was returned by Mrs. Vincent and her daughter, in a very few days; and Miss Vincent in the course of the visit, criticised so merrily and satirically some of Camilla's favourite aversions in the neighbourhood, that, convinced she did not fulfil her shadowy and despised ideal of a young lady, Camilla determined to see more of her, and invited her to spend the afternoon with her on the next day but one. Having overcome her first prejudice against admitting a young lady to her acquaintance, it was not strange that she caught eagerly at any amusement offered to her in her dull and uniform life.

On this occasion, Miss Vincent having expressed a wish to visit the Cranleigh milliner, they obtained Lady Vere's leave, and set forth together, and on the way the former made some inquiries of Camilla, on subjects in which she felt an interest.

"Are you fond of dancing, Miss St. Maur?" she said, as they walked along.

"That is one of the questions I can't answer, for I don't know. I used to hate my dancing lessons, but that I suppose is not very uncommon. My brother Reginald dislikes dancing, so I never think about it. I fancy, however, that I should like it pretty well, but not so much as riding; I am very fond of riding. Do you like it?"

"I think, like dancing, it depends on others. I like a riding party very much."

"I like riding in itself," Camilla said, "the party would have nothing to do with it."

"But you do have riding parties?"

"No, indeed. I ride with my brother Reginald; and if I might ride by myself I should like it still."

"Now, Miss St. Maur," said Miss Vincent, laying her hand playfully on her arm, "you are so close and reserved, that if I wish to find out what things interest you most deeply, I am obliged to make direct inquiries. Can you guess what I am going to ask?"

"No, indeed, I can't," Camilla said, and

said truly. "What *do* you want to know? I will tell you whatever you like."

"Well then, I wish to ask a question of great importance. Who is the hero of these parts?—there must be one."

"None that I know of," Camilla said, with some coldness, though she blushed as she spoke.

"Don't deceive me," replied Miss Vincent, looking smilingly in her face; "it would be impossible to persuade me that such a flower as this was doomed to blush unseen."

"I don't quite know what you mean," said Camilla, with some impatience; "but if you mean what I think you mean, you are quite wrong. Reginald and I don't care for heroes and heroines."

"Well, Miss St. Maur," she replied, still playfully, "I will be as discreet as you are, and ask no questions; but I shall make use of my eyes, and if I make any discoveries I shall not spare you."

"You will make none, for there are none to make;" Camilla spoke coldly and shortly.

She thought Miss Vincent extremely impertinent.

“Have you no wish to be liked and admired, Miss St. Maur?” Miss Vincent asked, after a silence of a few seconds. “You are very unlike girls, or, I might say, the world in general, if it is so.”

“Oh, I don’t say that,” replied Camilla, laughing. “If I might choose, I should like to be a queen, and to have all the world kneeling admiringly at my feet.”

“I dare say,” said her companion, laughing also; “but that was not quite the kind of admiration I meant. I meant admiration of a more homely kind. In plain words, have you no wish to be *loved*?”

“I suppose I should have no particular objection to it; but if you mean to ask me whether I sit at home pining for a hero — I don’t. I don’t much care about that sort of thing for myself. I am not sentimental, nor more is Reginald.”

“Well, Miss St. Maur, I believe you now; for if there *was* a hero in these parts, I don’t think you would speak as you do.

You are very young and fresh, I see, and you don't understand the pleasures and excitements of . . . what shall I call it? But it will come, depend upon it. One doesn't live very long in the world without it. I speak from experience!"

Camilla felt a little curiosity as to the nature of Miss Vincent's experience, but she was afraid and ashamed to ask. Such conversation was new to her. She was shrinkingly reserved on subjects of a like kind, even in idea, partly by nature, partly from Reginald's distaste.

"I don't mean only my own experience," Miss Vincent began again, after a pause, "but I have seen such strange things — watched the progress of such strangely interesting stories. I am sure *I* can say that 'truth is stranger than fiction.'"

"I wish you would tell me some of your stories. I should like to hear a real, true story, from an eye-witness, very much."

"I will some day, if I may; but you know one must be discreet. Things are confided to me, and I must not repeat them."

“Oh, of course not,” Camilla said, vehemently; “I would not hear a betrayed confidence for the world!”

“How very fresh and unsophisticated you are,” observed Miss Vincent, looking at her with a smile; “how you would be admired in London!”

“Don’t talk nonsense, pray, Miss Vincent,” she said, blushing like a rose at the compliment.

“Well, I won’t, for I see you are not like girls in general. But to give you an idea of the kind of excitements I mean, and which occur every day in the world, I will tell you a funny thing that happened last summer. A young girl, very fresh and very pretty, came from the country for two months, to go out with mamma. She went to a ball the first night and made a few acquaintances, but she was tired and soon begged to go home. The next morning early, a large bouquet was left for her at our house. The same thing happened every morning for two months; and by no means or inquiries could we discover whence the bouquet

came. She went out a great deal and was very much admired, but rather in a general than a particular way. We could not fix on anybody. You may fancy how curious we were. I really could think of nothing else."

"Yes," Camilla said, with some interest, "it must have been rather exciting. A mystery would always take my fancy; but is it a mystery still? I hope you discovered the author of such pretty attentions at last?"

"Yes, I discovered it at last, and in rather a funny way. One day the bouquet was so very beautiful and *recherché*, that I examined it with more attention than usual, and I happened to remark among the flowers a carnation of a very peculiar kind and colour. We went to a ball the same evening; and suddenly, while I was thinking of other things, my eyes happened to fall on a flower in a gentleman's coat,—the very same rare and peculiar carnation. He was the last person whom I should have suspected of such a thing; rather an old person—I mean old, compared to Ellen Vivian—

given up dancing, and that sort of thing. However, I felt there could be no doubt; and soon after, when he came up to speak to Ellen, I joined them, and pointed out the discovery I had made. You have no idea how foolish they both looked."

"Oh! Miss Vincent, I call that cruel. I couldn't have done such a thing."

"It was wrong, I allow, and I repented of it at first; for they seemed so much embarrassed. But I don't repent of it now; for I am sure I helped them to an understanding. I heard this morning that they were engaged to be married."

"Well, it is a pretty story, certainly;—but now here we are at Mrs. Pope's. Do you really want anything?"

"Oh yes; I always want bows and ribbons—one requires such a variety. Pray, let us go in."

Miss Vincent became excited in her purchases (a country shop is certainly very taking), and Camilla stood by her side in some amusement for a few minutes; but growing tired, and a little annoyed at the

gossiping conversation into which she entered with Mrs. Pope, she retired to the doorway, and looked up and down the pretty rambling street of Cranleigh.

While she stood there, Ernest De Grey came from a cottage opposite, and, with a start of pleasure, approached her.

"Oh! Mr. De Grey," she exclaimed, with her cordial manner, "how glad I am to see you!"

He was so extremely glad to see *her*, that he did not dare to trust himself to say so. He shook hands with her in silence, then said,

"It is more than ten days since I have even *seen* you. You were not even at church on Sunday."

"No; and I dare say you think it was my wickedness that kept me away; but it was not, indeed. I should have gone if I could; but mamma had a cold; and you know, or perhaps you don't know, that when she has a cold she fancies that all the world must have the same. She would not let me go."

"I did not suspect you of wickedness, in deed," he said. "I *thought* you would come if you could, because it is right; but if not that, I *knew* you would come for your brother's sake."

"Right, Mr. De Grey, quite right. But, besides, since you have been here, I really like to go to church. Though, I dare say, you don't see it, and though I am sure nobody else sees it, you have done me a little good already. And where are you going now?" she inquired, after a pause.

"I am going home directly, to an appointment. Have you been buying any more ribbons?"

"No, not to-day. But you see I have got my blue ribbon on my bonnet."

"Yes, I see; I think it is very pretty."

He looked at her with a gaze of such extreme admiration, that an unenlightened person might have supposed it was excited by some less inanimate object than the ribbon.

"I put it on, to show Miss Vincent the wonders of Cranleigh. Miss Vincent is a

new acquaintance of mine. Do you know her?"

"No, not at all."

"Then I will introduce you to her."

She turned round to see if her companion was ready, and found her standing a few steps behind her within the doorway, with a smile upon her face. She apologised for having kept her waiting, and then, with her usual ease and grace, begged to be allowed to introduce Mr. De Grey.

Ernest bowed; and, after a moment's pause, bowed again, and retreated. He had, like Camilla, a shadowy ideal of a young lady,—a being with whom he had nothing in common; and something in Miss Vincent's air and appearance proclaiming her to be one of the species, he instinctively withdrew.

Camilla laughed, for she read the thoughts that passed through his mind.

"Now, Miss St. Maur," Miss Vincent said, as they re-entered the gates of the park, "I cannot help reproaching you. I had hoped you meant to allow me the privilege of being your friend."

"Oh, yes!" Camilla said. She felt inclined to add, "in a degree," for she certainly was not quite prepared to swear an eternal friendship; but she refrained.

"Then, why have you deceived me?"

"I have not deceived you; I never deceive. What *do* you mean?"

"I thought you said there was no hero in these parts."

"There is none," she replied, impatiently, but blushing as she spoke.

Miss Vincent shook her head at her, with a playful smile. "Oh, Miss St. Maur!"

"I wish you had not such fancies, Miss Vincent," Camilla said, blushing still more deeply.

"I am very sorry for my fancies, but really I cannot help them. I think you must be very fastidious indeed, if you do not allow that young man to be good enough for a hero."

"A hero, Miss Vincent! Why, that was Mr. De Grey, the clergyman of the parish."

"So I supposed, from a part of your conversation, which I overheard. But what

of that? Do you think all clergymen are blind? *He* is not blind, at any rate."

"Blind about what?" with a little impatient stamp of her foot.

"Oh! Miss St. Maur, you *are* deceiving me now. I see you know what I mean. No!" as Camilla shook her head; "well, I will tell you then. I have seen a great many people in love—a very great many—but I never, no *never*, saw any one so deeply in love as that young man is."

"How can you talk such nonsense?" Camilla said, angrily, turning away her head as she spoke, to conceal her crimson cheeks; but a moment afterwards, with a pathetic tone, which in some degree reproached her companion, she went on:—"I wish you had not such fancies, Miss Vincent. I dare say you did not mean to do it; but you have spoiled all my pleasure and happiness. We have been very great friends; but now, how am I ever to talk to him comfortably again? I never shall; I never can!"

"My dear Miss St. Maur," Miss Vincent said, in apology, though she could hardly

help laughing, "I am sure I am very sorry to have annoyed you. But I had no idea that you would dislike my remarks. You are so different to most of my acquaintance." Seeing that Camilla's brow did not clear, she went on : "I am really very, very sorry — but I cannot believe that you did not see what is as clear as day?"

"I did not, Miss Vincent," she said, angrily ; "but never mind now. Let us talk of something else."

Instead, however, of talking of something else, she walked in profound silence to the house. New ideas had been put into her head.

On reaching Clare Abbey, Miss Vincent was told that her carriage was waiting. She hurried to take leave of Lady Vere ; then approached Camilla, who was standing at one of the drawing-room windows.

"My dear Miss St. Maur," she said, holding out her hand and retaining Camilla's when it was given to her, "what shall I say to make you forgive me? I would not for worlds have spoken as I did, if I had supposed it would annoy you. I am afraid

I have a habit of foolish and indiscreet speaking ; but don't be angry with me. I did not mean to offend, and you must teach me to correct myself."

Camilla relaxed. " Pray don't say any more," she said, smiling ; " I am not *very* angry ; only I must say, I think it very foolish speaking — and I don't like it at all."

" Well, but I am forgiven — and you will not avoid me for the future. Pray do not punish me so much ! "

Camilla smiled again ; and, pleased to be so much liked by Miss Vincent, rewarded her with a degree of affection much greater than before.

They became friends, and were often together ; and Miss Vincent (though much inferior to Camilla in natural talent), having the advantage of her in age, shrewdness, and knowledge of the world, she it was who influenced, and imparted her own mind to her youthful companion.

CHAPTER XIII.

Night visions may befriend ;—
Our waking dreams are fatal. How I dream'd
Of things impossible.—(Could sleep do more ?)
Of joys perpetual, in perpetual change ;
Of stable pleasures on the tossing wave !
Eternal sunshine in the storms of life !—
How richly were my noontide trances hung
With gorgeous tapestries of pictured joys !
Joy behind, joy in endless perspective.

YOUNG'S NIGHT THOUGHTS.

WITH Reginald's departure the summer of Ernest's life passed away, and autumn in more senses than one set in. He was left alone,—alone in his home, alone in his intellect, alone in his heart,—and his spirits sank beneath the solitude. Rousing himself from depression, he endeavoured then to turn his whole mind to his duties, to act upon his flitting dreams of improvement ; but the fresh and ardent spirit which he

had brought to the scene of his labours,—and which seems to have been allotted to new duties for the very purpose of overcoming the difficulties attendant upon them—super-seded by a higher excitement, had died away; and it was but with a languid step and joyless eyes that he devoted himself to his tasks. He had been basking in the sun of this world's happiness, and he was thirsting for it still; he had been blessed with a sight of this world's beauty, and he pined for it still; he had been dreaming dreams of this world's greatness and heroism, and his own simple duties filled him with shrinking and disgust.

But there is nothing hopeless except self-deception, and in Ernest's sincerity there was ever the golden thread that was to draw him upward again. He had been beguiled into wastefulness of his time, and if not into absolute neglect, yet into omission of duty; but now that the time was passed, and that the voice of the charmer was still, he *felt* what the effects had been; and in truth and humility, acknowledging his weak-

ness and unworthiness, he resolved to arouse himself to fight and to overcome.

He resolved,—and a sincere resolution is full of strength ; but almost before the resolution had passed his lips, and entered into his heart, a change in Camilla's manner plunged him into excitement more fatal than before.

His love for her, though indulged, though acknowledged, had hitherto lain as passive and hopeless within him, as if he had indulged in devotion to a bright particular star. He did not even argue the point,—a combination of feelings, insensibly and unquestioned, pronouncing that hope was not for him. Good sense and good feeling told him that, with *her* youth and *his* poverty, he should not seek for it to be ; natural diffidence told him that it could not be ; and that possibly which gave life and strength to all the others' voices, Camilla's frank and fearless manner, proclaimed aloud her utter indifference. So contentedly he had been satisfied to love her, contented to yield with thoughts far removed from selfish ones, the

entire and reverential devotion of an unwasted heart.

But under Miss Vincent's influence a new era came. First, conscious and shrinking, Camilla startled the word *hope* into his heart, then—she must, I fear, greatly fall in the estimation of my readers, but it must be owned that she began to flirt with him. She was herself unconscious of it; she was utterly indifferent to Ernest; she neither understood the kind and depth of his love, nor, indeed, understood in any degree that love was anything but an amusement at all; but, hearing the subject perpetually discussed by Miss Vincent, she began to take some interest in it,—began to be pleased with the idea of Ernest's devotion,—began childishly to wish for some outward signs of her power. It was but too natural; but to poor Ernest it was fatal.

He did not learn to believe that she loved him; for her manner was so childish and changeable, that as fast as the idea arose it vanished again. If a blush or a sweet smile entranced him with rapture, a careless word

plunged him the very next moment into despair. But this uncertainty it was that destroyed him : it led him to pass

“ The night, the dawn, the noon, the dewy eve
In the sweet serious idleness of love ! ”

The livelong day it laid him at Camilla's feet, in spirit not in reality, questioning the meaning of her sunny smiles, and the glances of her speaking eyes. It plunged him into that excitement from which there is no escape,—the excitement of the mind. Outward excitements leave time for rest,—the most dissipated have their moments of repose ; but in the mental fever there is no pause. It bore him company in his solitary home,—it made his heart beat in the silence of night,—it entered with him into the house of God, and followed him with syren whispers even to the couch of sickness and the bed of death !

But such dreams do not last for ever : they must receive either a check, or rise into more tangible being. After a fortnight's mad excitement Ernest awoke,—and it was his own boldness which awoke him.

He called one day at Clare Abbey while Lady Vere was driving, and was admitted by mistake. He found Camilla alone in the drawing-room.

"Mamma is out," she said, going forward with her winning manner to meet him. "Did you know it ; or did you expect to find her here ?"

"I certainly expected to find her here," he replied, with a smile.

"Ah," she said, shaking her head laughingly, "I thought it was a new thing that you should come to see *me*. But, now that you are come, though by mistake, will you stay ?"

"May I stay ?" he asked, hesitatingly,—for Lady Vere was particular on points of etiquette and propriety ; not more particular than she should have been, but more careful of the letter than the spirit of such rules.

"I don't know about *may* ; I only ask you if you *will* stay? I have got a cough, and that makes me stupid ; and the day is so dark, and the wind so howling, it makes one dreary ; and I am reading a novel of Miss Vincent's, which really is too melancholy.

So I ask you, out of charity, to stay and cheer me a little. Will you stay?"—she smiled very sweetly as she spoke.

He sat down. He knew that he should not stay: he knew that, under his present feelings, it was dangerous to him to be alone with her,—and yet he stayed. As to refusing her anything when she looked as she then did, he could not do it. He sat down in silence, conscious of his weakness, warned that he was wrong, but with a strange feeling of pleasure.

"I ought not to be stupid and dreary to-day," she began, after a moment; "for I have had a letter from Reginald this morning, full of his plans and his hopes, and he says he shall be here in three weeks. That is good news, is it not?—I was half afraid his degree would keep him dawdling at Oxford."

"Good news, indeed," Ernest said, warmly, "for me as well as for you."

"I thought you would be glad. Do you know, Mr. De Grey, I really think you like Reginald as much as he deserves."

"*Like* him!" Ernest repeated gravely,

for the thought of Reginald brought feelings of self-condemnation; "no! that is not what *I* ought to say—I *reverence* him."

"So do I," she said, smiling; "on that one single point we agree."

"Only on that one?"

"Only on that one, I think; at least I cannot remember any other. I think we always disagree."

"I should be very sorry to think so," he said with a good deal of earnestness.

"Why, don't you know that the strongest disagreements make the strongest friendships? so at least this book says," touching the novel that lay beside her; "and so I suppose that *we* are to be very great friends."

He made no answer. She spoke so lightly, so carelessly—it was one of the moments when the vision suddenly faded; but suddenly, swiftly, and never so brightly, the next instant it rose again before him; for, leaning forward on her arm, a faint blush on her lovely face, and a faint tone of pique, or rather of reproach, in her sweet voice, she said,—

“ You don’t seem to care for that. I thought you would have been glad to think that we should be friends.”

He almost started; and with more than earnestness—with agitation in voice, and look, and manner, he replied, “ You do not think so : you know too well what I hope, if I could but dare to say so.”

He was leaning forward, his eyes intently resting upon her. She had forced him so to look, and so to speak : but he never had so forgotten himself before ; and alarmed and displeased, and unconscious what he meant, she drew back with a quick movement, and a deep and startled blush.

And the vision suddenly and silently disappeared,—not for the moment flitting and returning again,—but the mist dispersed, he awoke.

He also drew back, and sate, his hat in his hand, in profound meditation. How wrongly had he judged her—so he mused ; and how wrongly he had acted. With her careless innocent charm of manner she was but inviting him to ease and to confidence ;

and how had he rewarded her?—He had put a meaning to her words they did not bear; he had taken advantage of her thoughtless frankness,—of the intimacy into which circumstances had thrown them. He was a wretch, unworthy to be admitted into her society;—this was his conclusion. But he would repair what he had done,—there, in her presence, he would bind himself by the most solemn vow to be tempted to such a forgetfulness of duty no more.

The silence caused by these meditations lasted for a considerable time. It was Camilla who first recovered herself, and laughing to conceal a little embarrassment, and, as if to invite a return to their former easy footing, addressed him :

“Will you never speak again, Mr. De Grey? You are not very civil.”

“I beg your pardon!” he said, getting up with a grave smile; “but I had forgotten myself. I have a good many things to take up my thoughts; but I ought to remember that it is very rude and ill-mannered

to bring my thoughts here. I ought to have remembered it before."

"But I don't think it rude; I hope you don't think I do. You know," she continued with the same enchanting blush, influenced to speak by a feeling of pity which at the moment she scarcely understood, and did not pause to analyze; "you know, if we are to be great friends, we must not be ready to take offence at every little trifle."

"You are very kind to say so," Ernest replied steadily and composedly, still under the influence of his new resolutions; "but I hope I shall not try you again. It is a bad day with me in every way: I know that I have offended in more ways than one." He held out his hand, and disappeared before she had time to say more.

Camilla quickly forgot the impression of that one look and those few words which had startled her; and in their occasional meetings all went on as it had done before. She was very childish,—very thoughtless; this was her only excuse, and she needed one.

The trials of life are various. Some have one hard fight, and coming off victorious, are for ever at peace. The conquest is so complete, the root of the evil so completely cut off, that they are assailed no more. Others live in warfare all their life long,—never so yielding as utterly to fall, never so conquering as entirely to triumph! These are they who are

“Pinioned with mortality

As an entangled, hamper’d thing.”

These are they whose thirst for earthly happiness is too intense; these are they whose strong affections make strong afflictions, and raise for themselves trials in paths so peaceful and flowery, that men for the most part would pass along them with a dancing step,—and such an one was poor Ernest!

He returned with something of renewed attention to his duties. He resisted the impression of Camilla’s manner; he resisted, or thought he resisted, the risings of fresh hope; but he was restless and depressed, and as he went about his un-

loved tasks, he was unceasingly asking himself why object after object on which his heart was set was denied to him, — why desire after desire was withheld! And while thus repiningly pondering, he forgot—as many are apt in disappointment to forget—that while a few things were withheld from him, a shower of abundant and unmerited blessings were falling upon his head.

CHAPTER XIV.

For oft when summer leaves were bright
And every flower was bathed in light,
In sunshine moments past,
My wilful heart would burst away
From where the holy shadow lay,
Where Heaven my lot had cast.

THE CHRISTIAN YEAR.

Think not of rest—though dreams be sweet,
Start up and ply your heaven-ward feet ;
Is not God's oath upon your head,
Ne'er to sink back on slothful bed ?

IBID.

CHRISTMAS came, and with Christmas Reginald arrived, and with Christmas—came a visitor to Ernest De Grey.

Lady Vere and Camilla were returning from a long drive on a cold afternoon the day after Christmas day ; the wind was piercing, and the air foggy and cold. At a distance of five or six miles from Cranleigh they observed Ernest, leaning against a large tree

by the side of the high-road. At Camilla's desire, to gratify her curiosity, they drew up to speak to him.

"What are you doing?" she inquired as he approached the carriage; "how can you stand there in this piercing wind?"

"Is it worse for me than for you?" he said, with a smile.

"Ah! but look at our fur cloaks; we can hardly be cold."

"They are extremely comfortable," observed Lady Vere; and added, civilly, "I wish we could spare you one."

"Thank you very much, but I am not cold. I don't mind a fresh wind, I rather like it; it seems to drive the clouds away from one's intellect," and he half sighed as he spoke. "Besides, I have not been standing long; I walked here to meet my mother, and was only resting: if she does not come soon, I shall go on further."

"Is your mother coming here?" Camilla said, in surprise.

"Yes, I expect her this afternoon,—but only for one whole day."

“And is it for fear of losing one single minute of her visit, that you come all this way to meet her?”

“Partly that and partly from other things. I thought,” he said with a slight smile, “that she would feel strange coming back here alone; and I could not go to the station to meet her, because it is St. Stephen’s day, and I was detained by the service and other things.”

“You are a very good son, Mr. De Grey; I must say that for you,” Camilla said approvingly. “I have often thought so before.”

“I should be so,” he replied earnestly.

She looked at him for a moment with a kind of curiosity; then looked at her own mother’s vacant face, and sighed. Her advancing years and deepening thought, Miss Vincent’s influence, and the style of sentimental reading and reflection to which that influence led her, enlarging much,—if it *could* be so, even too much, on the necessity and happiness of sympathy, often made her sigh over the want of such a blessing in her home; and there was a tone of tenderness

in her voice, as leaning forward again to Ernest, she said,

“May I come to see your mother? I should like it; I am sure I should like her so very much.”

He coloured with pleasure at her tone and her words; but endeavouring to conceal any too great expression of his feeling, replied only quietly, how happy her visit would make both his mother and himself.

“Then I shall come to-morrow — and mamma too. Mamma, I am sure you would like to make acquaintance with Mrs. De Grey—shouldn’t you?”

“It would give me, I assure you, the very greatest pleasure,” Lady Vere said, with her ever ready politeness.

“You must be very cold, I won’t stop you any more,” Ernest remarked, and retreated from the carriage; “it is getting late, too.”

“Reginald is gone, you know; I am afraid he never will stay here steadily again. I am very sorry his education is over.”

“He told me you were displeased with

him," Ernest said, smiling; "but I hope you have forgiven him; he could not help it."

"I got up to breakfast with him at six this very bad morning; don't you think that looks like forgiveness?"

"I think it does indeed." And the carriage drove on, leaving Ernest in a reverie of a very lover-like kind; the sound of a rattling post-chaise, however, quickly aroused him, and Camilla was for a time forgotten, in the intense pleasure with which he saw his mother again.

Mr. De Grey had determined never to visit the neighbourhood of Clare Abbey; and so uncertain were his spirits, and so constant his desire for attention, that his wife, unwilling to leave him even for a day, had scarcely contemplated the possibility of seeing her son in his new home. During the last few weeks, however, his letters had troubled her. He said nothing of his feelings, made no complaint; he himself fancied he wrote as usual, but there was in their tone a melancholy and depression, so constant and so evident, that she felt called

upon by absolute necessity to inquire into the cause. At a short notice, therefore, she came for a short visit to Cranleigh. But the visit was little calculated to set her mind at ease. Ernest was excited by her coming, and was besides determined to be cheerful ; but though something of the depression of his spirits he could and did conceal, he could not (to a mind as true as his, it was impossible) conceal the languor and heartlessness with which his duties were performed. Something more than happiness was at stake, that Mrs. De Grey saw plainly, and though Ernest shrank, as he never had done before, from the least allusion to himself and his own state of mind, it did not need Mrs. Cook's dark hints and mysterious allusions, to lead her to guess the cause.

"I hope, mamma, you will be very particularly civil to Mrs. De Grey," Camilla said, as they drove up to the door of the parsonage early in the afternoon ; "you know it is almost like going to see yourself."

"How so, my dear Camilla ?" inquired her mother, with a puzzled look.

“Why, mamma, you know if Mr. De Grey had not lost his fortune, Mrs. De Grey would have been in your place at Clare Abbey.”

“True, Camilla,—but,” she added, with unusual acuteness, “I should never have been at the parsonage.”

“Well, mamma, I hope, at any rate, that you will be very civil.”

“I hope I always am civil,” replied Lady Vere, with complacency. Nevertheless, warned by Camilla, she gathered up her powers for a more than ordinary show of politeness.

And she *was* extremely civil, and kind as well as civil; but how could her kindness or civility be thought of, in presence of the winning grace and gentleness of Camilla’s manner? The tenderness with which she and Reginald always thought of the De Greys, and which on the present occasion could so safely and properly be shown, gave an added charm to her usual fascinating cordiality; and nothing prettier could have been conceived than the half tender, half smiling face—the half playful and half

serious words with which she gave Mrs. De Grey her own welcome to the neighbourhood.

With pleased and grateful admiration Mrs. De Grey regarded her, but she turned her eyes from her lovely face to cast them with pity and sympathy on her son. Her attempt at sympathy was, however, in vain. Ernest was not observing her—was not thinking of himself; inexpressible and irrepressible feelings were in his mind as he watched Camilla. Her manner to his mother had placed her on the pinnacle of human perfection. He thought he never had loved her as he ought—never done her justice before: he was lost and gone in a trance of gratitude and admiration.

He was standing near the window, thoughtful and abstracted, when Camilla, leaving her mother in the exhibition of her necessary civilities to Mrs. De Grey, joined him.

“Do you know, Mr. De Grey,” she said, playfully, “I have wished so much and so often to see your house, and though I have often hinted my wish, you never would offer to show it. I am afraid that must have been

the cause of my great desire to come here to-day."

"I never thought of your wishing to see it," he said, smiling, "or I am sure I should have been only too happy. What do you think of it, now you do see it?" He turned a chair into a more convenient posture as he spoke, and moved it towards her.

She sat down and looked about her. "It is not only because I always think new rooms pretty, but really and truly I think this the prettiest room I ever saw."

And her admiration was justified; for it *was* one of the prettiest rooms of the kind that could have been imagined. The furniture was light and suitable; the chintz, one of the prettiest of chintzes; and the sea-green walls were ornamented by engravings (proclaiming the owner's active tastes) from some of Landseer's choicest pictures. All looked fresh and bright and habitable—a perfect picture of domestic comfort.

"I am glad you admire it," Ernest said, much gratified, "for I must say I think it pretty myself."

“If I say quite what I think — I think it a great deal too pretty for you,” and she moved her head emphatically as she spoke. “I had no idea that clergymen made themselves so comfortable.”

“I assure you I more than agree with you,” Ernest replied, laughing, yet seriously also. “I never go to see Mrs. Hervey without feeling ashamed of myself. But it is not my fault ; everything you see was given to me. My rector at Chesford gave me the furniture, and his sisters the paper and the chintz, my father and mother gave me the books, and two very old friends, Harry and Leopold Leslie, gave me those pretty engravings. Whatever you may think of me, I will not be set down as luxurious and extravagant.”

“I think Mr. De Grey,” and she looked up at him, “that you seem to be unusually fortunate in finding friends.” There was something of mingled softness and sadness in her voice which might have been, which partly was, misunderstood.

“I am indeed,” he replied earnestly, and

his eyes rested upon her with a look of such deep and grateful tenderness, that his mother, attracted by the gaze, paused in her conversation to watch its effect upon the young face lifted to his. She gazed for a moment, then turned away her head with a sigh. It was not that in sober judgment she desired a return of Ernest's affection — but reason and feeling do not always speak the same language, and she could not read the signs of his perfect love and her indifference unmoved.

Of the feelings that prompted Ernest's words — of the meaning that shone in his clear blue eyes, Camilla was apparently unconscious. Thought, indeed, and something of sadness was on her brow, but it was no thought for him. The subject of her meditations shortly appeared.

“ You are more fortunate than I am. There is no one in the world, except, perhaps, Reginald, who would have taken so much thought and care for me.” She was expressing a growing feeling of melancholy and discontent which had taken possession

of her mind — it came she knew not how or whence, but it was filling her with vague repinings and indefinable longings.

“Why do you say so?” Ernest replied gravely, for he was endeavouring not to say something else, and the endeavour made him restrained. “You cannot think it, and you should not say what you do not think.”

“But I do think it,” she said, sadly; “I always say what I mean. Perhaps you think Miss Vincent is a great friend; but I know just how much of a friend she is, and how much she cares for me. I like her more than she likes me; and there is no one else — no; and even Reginald, I sometimes think, does not really care for me; at least he despises as well as cares.”

Ernest made no answer. He would have given the world to speak; but his own thought was not to be spoken, and he could say nothing else.

“I believe you think I deserve no better,” Camilla continued, partly in the same tone, but a little petulantly also. “I dare say you are right; but, though it may be right, I

often wish it were not so. I often wish that Reginald were not so taken up with his great thoughts ;—at this time especially, I have wished a good deal that he would think more of me.”

“He was very much occupied these few days,” Ernest said, suppressing with a violent effort any allusion to himself, though he thought himself a brute for his coldness. “It will not be so again. Don’t tell me that there is any shadow of discontent between your brother and you, for it would grieve me to think so.”

“Well, there is none,” she cried, warmly, “or at least,” with a touch of sadness again, “if there is, it is because I am unworthy of him. Sometimes I wish I were more like him, and sometimes, a little, I wish that he were more like me. Sometimes I feel as if our happiest days were past—that he will grow greater, and I shall grow less—that he will grow better, and I shall grow worse ; and then he will hate me.”

“If I were you,” Ernest said, still gravely, “I would not allow myself to think of the

possibility of such a thing. You know we don't grow worse quite without our own will."

"But I am not sure that my will is quite against it. I don't know—it seems to me that everybody is growing very grave and severe, and I don't like gravity. You, too, Mr. De Grey, you are graver than you used to be. You are as grave now as Reginald is, and much more severe."

"Severe!" he exclaimed hastily, startled into anxiety; "do *you* think me severe?" But, whether consciously or unconsciously, his mother's eye fell upon him as he spoke, seeming to warn and to restrain him, and with something of formal quietness the sentence was finished. "I certainly have no right to be severe with any one except myself."

"But you are severe—" she was persisting, when they were interrupted.

"Mrs. De Grey says she won't dine with us, Camilla." Mrs. De Grey smiled at Lady Vere's concise communication of her refusal; but she did not contradict it.

“Then I was right, mamma,” Camilla said, leaving her seat, and taking another on the opposite side of the room. “I said,” she continued, leaning towards Mrs. De Grey, “that you would not: I said that it would be a shame if you were to spoil all Mr. De Grey’s pleasure by dining out on this one single day. But I am sorry, very sorry, that I am right.” And she smiled so prettily, so kindly, so engagingly, that Ernest turned away, and stood looking out of the window during the remainder of the visit.

The conversation continued for a few minutes between Mrs. De Grey and Camilla—the mood of the past hour forgotten, Camilla as gay again as a child. Then Lady Vere rose from her seat, and a repetition of her civil speeches recommenced.

“I am so glad to have seen your pretty house,” Camilla said to Ernest, while the ceremonial was proceeding; “for now I shall be relieved from pitying you. I *have* pitied you very much and very often for living here alone; but now I am sure I need not pity you any more.”

“Don’t pity me for living alone,” he said, with a little irritation in his manner, “for I like it.”

“Do you really like living alone?” she inquired, with some surprise.

“Yes, I really do.” And, having put her and Lady Vere into the carriage, he proceeded to prove the truth of his words by leaving his mother’s society, and going for a solitary walk.

There are some good actions, which do not receive as they merit the reward of an approving conscience, and Ernest’s self-control was of that nature. He felt angry with himself, and angry with his mother, because he saw her views of his duty agreed with his. Never had Camilla been so gentle, so engaging, so lovable; never had he been so indifferent in manner, so repulsive. And why was it to be, he asked, and why was he to thwart his own wishes, and perhaps hers also? Or if not now, if too childish and thoughtless now to dream of love, why might he not teach her to love him,—win her to love him? What in the world could

make her happier than a love like his? So he walked by himself, and talked with himself, till conflicting views and conflicting feelings, and indulged dreams, had reduced his mind to a state of uncontrollable irritation and excitement.

He returned to the house only when he dared, for his mother's sake, remain no longer absent. She was seated in the quiet room, the lamp before her, engaged in writing to her husband. On Ernest's entrance she looked up, and laid down her pen; but, after a short observation of his countenance, she resumed it again, and merely greeting him with a smile, stooped her head over her letter, and appeared to be lost in thought. Ernest stood for a moment by the fire; then listlessly walking to the book-shelves, he took down a large book, and placing it on the opposite side of the lamp, sat down before it. He put his elbows on the book, crossed his hands, rested his forehead upon them, and began to read.

His mother watched him at intervals.

His eyes were steadily fixed on the page, but the page was never turned. She made, however, no remark, quietly finished her letter, sealed it, and laid it aside, unperceived by him sought for her work, and sat down again. Then at last, suddenly and quietly, she broke the silence.

“ You asked me last night, Ernest, to recommend you a text : I have thought of one on which I should much like you to preach, and which would be appropriate to the end of the old and the beginning of the new year.”

She drew a Bible towards her, and opening it, placed it before him with her finger on the following words :—

“ No man having put his hand to the plough and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.”

Ernest looked at it—looked at his mother, and coloured deeply ; then suddenly closing the book and speaking in a very resolute tone he said, “ No, mother ; whatever I may be, I will not be dishonest—I will not preach what I do not practise.”

“But, Ernest,” she said, seriously, “what do you mean by not practising? Should you not preach and practise too?”

“I should, mother, but I do not. I confess it,” he continued, passionately and excitedly, “I do look back—I would not be what I am—I would be what I am not—I would be *anything* which could give me a better hope of winning, a better right to try to win *her* heart.”

He turned rapidly over some pages; then again placing his elbows on the book, and shading his face, began to read.

Advice, it is said, is only powerful when it puts into language the secret oracle of our souls. There is a time to speak and a time to keep silence; and the time for speech is not at that moment when, through passion or excitement, the voice of the secret oracle is unheard. Most unwise are they who force the responsibility of even sweet and wholesome counsel on an unprepared spirit.

Mrs. De Grey was well aware of this, as of most of the secrets of the human mind; and she suffered her son's passionate and

wayward speech to pass uncorrected and unreprieved.

Her forbearance touched him and restored him to himself, sooner than a thousand arguments would have done, and he was the first to recur to the subject.

As they sat together in the evening, he suddenly rose from his seat, and withdrawing himself from the bright light of the lamp, said, with an effort, "Mother, you must have thought me very weak, very wicked, when I spoke this afternoon."

"No, my dear Ernest," she answered, tenderly, "those were not my thoughts. It is easy to speak of the weakness of those who are deeply tried—easy to condemn—but none but those who suffer know what their trial is. *You* can tell how, and how far you have failed—I only grieved for you."

He sighed and said nothing.

His mother paused for a moment, then continued steadily, "Grieved for you, Ernest, but I did not, I do not despair. You have indulged in feelings that must not be indulged; but you will not utterly fail. You

will arouse yourself, and you will conquer yet."

"*Conquer*, mother! You think then it must be so. I must conquer; there is no other hope."

"I do, Ernest," she said, gently. "Consider Miss St. Maur's youth, and her father's probable will, and then remember that you are *her* guardian, as well as that of the poorest among the people. I cannot think it is for you to attempt to gain her heart. And besides this, Ernest," she continued steadily, for it was not for her to shrink from speaking the truth, however painful, "she does not love you."

He knew it as well as she did. When the question unexcitedly was asked, he *knew* that if she did love him, her words and actions would be far other than what they were; but the calm conviction of his mother's words fell like lead upon his soul.

He sat by the fire, playing with the ashes, drawing with the poker mysterious signs and figures. He could not reply to her.

“What *might* be at a future day,” she began again, after a pause, “I do not know. That it would be *impossible* for you to win her heart, I am far from thinking. How could I think it, dear Ernest, when I know you, and what the treasure of your love would be? But I do not think she loves you now, or wishes to love you; and I do not think it would be for her happiness or yours—for her good or for yours, even if there were not other considerations—that it should be so. I feel her charms, dear Ernest, almost as you can do; I see her beauty, and I feel that her mind is as full of natural beauty as her most lovely face; but she is still almost a child, a wild, untaught child—and I do not think the quiet, sober, *holy* life which your wife should lead, could be anything to her but a temptation.” She paused again; she wished to hear him speak, and he spoke at last, and with excitement in his tone.

“I know you are right, mother—I feel you are right—I have felt the same again and again. Do not fear, I will not speak;

if I cannot conquer, I will at least be silent. I have vowed it before, and I say it again before you, *my lips shall never tell her what I feel*. Whatever may come, I will not reproach myself with having attempted to win her love. But, mother," he continued after a moment, in an altered voice, "how is life to go on?—I often ask myself. This perpetual struggle, it makes it burdensome, it makes it even hateful to me."

"Do you remember," she said, with a smile, "how you longed in your early days to be a hero?" He shook his head; his heroism had not been of an enduring, suffering kind. "I remember it; and I remember too," she added fondly, "that you have fulfilled your early wish. If to sacrifice for others our dearest hopes can make one so, you *have* been a hero. Why are you to dread your power now?"

"Because I am not, mother, what I once was; I do not even feel as I used to feel: I am become mean, low, selfish, and a coward." He spoke with vehemence.

“These are hard words, Ernest,” and his mother smiled faintly ; “but I will not contradict you. It *is* cowardly in you, in me, in all, to shrink from any plain duty that lies before us. But, Ernest,” she continued more seriously, “will you submit to be a coward? You have higher and holier motives than you had in your youth, and you know better where to find the strength that will arm you to overcome.” She stopped again, then again began with something of hesitation, “There is one motive which I am almost afraid to point out to you, lest it should influence you more than the one high motive which ought to be your’s. But earthly motives may and should influence us in their degree, and this is far from being a merely earthly one. I wish you to think of her whom you so fondly love, for whose welfare and happiness, not in this world only, you are bound to provide. If she sees you the guardian and teacher set over her by God himself,—if she sees *you* tied and bound with earthly care and earthly passion,—how will she ever learn to rise? Surely,

dear Ernest, you have motives to awake and be strong."

He made no answer; he was sitting in profound thought, his head leaning against the chimney-piece. Unwilling to disturb him, or to banish his meditations; conscious, too, that *one* word in season is better than many words, Mrs. De Grey said no more, but laying down her work, left the room.

On her return, a short time afterwards, she found Ernest busily engaged in writing. He looked up with a smile that seemed to invite her approach,—a smile, if not a bright one, yet one that fell like returning sunshine on her heart. She looked over his shoulder and read his text, and stroked, as in his childhood, his dark glossy hair, but no remark was made on either side, and the subject was recurred to no more.

Something of languor had crept of late over Ernest's sermons. It could not have been otherwise; for it needs a singular gift of eloquence, or a turn of mind bordering at least on hypocrisy, to speak forcibly and persuasively on truths that are unfelt. No

such fault could however be found with his present discourse. It was in one strain of passionate exhortation from beginning to end; it was an address to himself as well as to his hearers, calling upon all to awake from the sleep of sloth, and to arise from the death of sin, and breaking forth from the bonds of their infirmities, to redeem in the opening year the hours of their wasted life.

It was eloquence,—not the eloquence of new thoughts clothed in choice words, and varied phrase, but the eloquence of simple truth, poured forth from roused feelings and a fervent heart.

CHAPTER XV.

Like some fair plant set by a heavenly hand,
He grew, he flourish'd, and he blest the land ;
In all the youth his father's image shined,
Bright in his person, brighter in his mind.

POPE'S ODYSSEY.

The remembrance of youth is a sigh.

ARABIAN PROVERB.

“WHAT a sermon we had this morning ! Edward,” remarked Mrs. Hervey to her son, on the following Sunday evening ; “ it went right through my old bones. If I were young and strong, and a man, I don't know what would not be the end of it.”

“ True, mother, it was a sermon calculated to make much impression. I wonder what young St. Maur thought of it.”

By “ young St. Maur ” Ernest's exhortations were more profitably and personally

applied than by old Mrs. Hervey and her son.

Reginald had returned from Oxford much changed and improved. There are certain times and occasions in life when, from no apparent reason, the mind makes strides, accomplishing in a few weeks that which the laggard footsteps of years have failed to fulfil. A change of scene, a new acquaintance, a new book, or causes even less apparent than these, have been the trumpet-call which has awakened whole armies of feelings, whole hosts of thought and power, in a youthful mind. Such an effect had this intercourse with Ernest De Grey produced on Reginald St. Maur.

He was changed and improved, because he was become practical. In dreaminess of mind, however high and exalted the dreams may be, there is childishness. It is action that marks the man, and Reginald had suddenly passed the boundary that separates the strong vigour of manhood from the imaginations of the child. Few understand their own powers of influence,

and poor Ernest, earthly and earth-bound, had little idea how his simple quiet words affected the loftier character of his friend. He would have felt himself unworthy to influence him, and perhaps he was so ; but, as a bridle to a noble restive horse, so Ernest's clear views and practical judgments tamed and subdued the soaring, but undefined, visions of the ambitious young man.

It was a mark of the true genius of Reginald's mind,—the true virtue of his character,—that he was so easily affected, so ready to receive instruction. Many kinds of talent,—many who are called clever, are narrow-minded and arrogant : they will not learn ; but the eye of true and pure genius is like a mirror, on which whatever is light is necessarily reflected : so it was with him. Day by day as he increased in age and stature, and outward beauty, he increased in wisdom and knowledge also, till the eye almost ached to follow him, so bright and full of promise was the dawning of his day.

With a glowing cheek and a sparkling eye, and a mind more glowing and kindling

within, Reginald listened to the sermon of Ernest De Grey. It is the character of strong and vigorous truth, that, like theameleon, it changes its colours and adapts itself to the eye of every beholder. An ignorant village girl remarked to one of her companions, "That mother must have been telling tales of *her*, or Mr. De Grey could never have preached as he did;" and the very same idea passed through the thoughts of the highly-educated young man. Ernest, he thought, must have seen *his* dangers, have studied *his* temptations, have wished to arouse *him* to exertion with the dawning of that first year of freedom and of life; and, responsive to the call, he determined to arise, and indulge fancy's dreams no more.

In the first freshness of feeling—in his first anxiety to prove himself and his power—his thoughts recurred to Ernest's strongly-expressed desire for the restoration of the Church. It had not been forgotten, but it had been superseded in his mind by dreams of a more expansive kind. To Ernest, it might be much to have dreamed in his

youth of restoring a church to its original beauty—of making way for the excluded forms of poor and lowly worshippers; but to Reginald, whose desires for improvement spread “far as the breeze can waft the billow’s foam,” it was a descent and humiliation.

With pleasure, however, as to a work laid ready to his hand, he recurred to it now, and a few hours’ consideration had formed a plan for its immediate accomplishment: a plan, perhaps, involving a needless sacrifice on his part; but which, from the very necessity of sacrifice, was acceptable.

On the Monday morning, he knocked at his father’s door, and was admitted.

Lord Vere sat at a large table, with books before and around him. He was engaged in some of the abstruse, bewildering metaphysical speculations, in which alone he delighted, and from which he was ever unwilling to be disturbed. As he raised his head on his son’s approach, the “Well?” with which he received him was nothing less than surly.

Reginald's colour rose, for he was sensitive to repulse; but he was not abashed by it. "If you are at leisure, father, I wish to speak to you," he said.

There was something in Reginald's manner of speaking, which superficial observers would have called formal; a grave and measured tone, apparent even when at his ease, and still more observable in his intercourse with his father; but closer observers those who watched the countenance changing as he spoke, would have seen that his measured words were but the barriers by which he restrained an eagerness perhaps too great, and an ardour liable to transgress the common bounds of self-control. His manner and words on this occasion were peculiarly grave and restrained, but never had their contrast with his speaking countenance been more strangely seen.

"Speak on, then," was Lord Vere's uninviting reply to his son's request.

"I would not trouble you, father, with my ideas or desires, if I could act upon them

without your leave. But what I have to ask requires your leave and assistance too." Without explaining himself further, he laid Ernest's drawing of the Cranleigh Church upon his father's book.

"What have we here?" exclaimed Lord Vere ironically, after inspecting the sketch for some moments. "I am no saint, Reginald, and if, bitten by these new-fangled notions, you wish to persuade me to build and endow churches, or rather *chapels*, you may spare your pains; I have no such intentions."

"No, father, I have no such wishes; my request is much more simple. This is a drawing of Cranleigh Church as I suppose it once was, and as it ought to be. It is now some months since Ernest De Grey pointed out to me the improvement that might be made, and the advantage the people would derive from its restoration. I listened coldly at the time, for I am apt to dream dreams of many and great actions, and to neglect even the small ones that lie at my feet; but now, father, I feel that the years are creeping on, and that the pains you have

bestowed upon me should begin to bear fruit ; and I should be willing to enter on my life with some such work as this ; to mark its beginning by an offering to God and to man."

Lord Vere listened to his son with fixed attention. He *knew* Reginald's character well ; but it was very rarely that, in his presence at least, that character was expressed in words. His answer, however, was given in his usual ironical tone.

"If I were a philanthropist like you, Reginald, I should dream of some more profitable scheme than that of adorning a church for a parcel of ignorant rustics, who will be none the wiser when the work is done."

"Not the wiser, but perhaps the better, father. It is good to look on beauty : I have felt it myself."

And so at the moment the father seemed to feel likewise ; for as his eyes rested on the countenance before him, pure and glowing as the face of a young seraph—a something as by magic touched his heart, awak-

ing thoughts which had long slept, calling forth a father's tenderness, of which till now he had been unconscious, kindling a father's pride and a father's ambition—casting him back upon the long past, sending him forth into the far future.

Of these varied thoughts, however, there was little evidence in Lord Vere's outward manner. His reply was in a degree, but only a degree, less cold.

“Your dreams must bide their time, Reginald—bide *your* time, I should say; for even if I had a fancy for such airy schemes, my hands are shackled. These are times when even the richest are poor; and had I the inclination, I have not the power to throw my money away.”

“You misunderstand me, father: it is I who wish to do it. I have considered and arranged it all, if you will only consent.”

And quietly and methodically, with a definiteness unlike the plans of a dreamer, he detailed his intention. The probable cost of the alterations and improvements was estimated at £2,000, the beauty of the older

parts of the building making any additions necessarily costly. He purposed that his father should borrow the sum required on the security of the property, and deduct a yearly sum of £100 or £150 from his allowance, until the whole was repaid.

Lord Vere listened, but shook his head.

“You are a dreamer indeed, Reginald. Wait a while. £500 a year is all I can allow you; and let me tell you £500 a year is no inexhaustible store. You will not thank me for shackling you with this claim for a mere visionary good, when once you are fairly launched on your world of pleasure and ambition.”

“I know, father, what you say is true,” Reginald said, thoughtfully. “When fresh hopes and new desires arise, I may feel regret that I am already so much bound; but, father, if this work is good now, it will be so then, and I ought not to feel regret.” He paused and hesitated; then added, “And if I do feel it, I ought to rejoice. Nothing great or good will ever be done without self-denial, and the feeling of

this claim upon me will but animate me to more."

A thousand hopes of a bright and active future sparkled in his radiant eye, and again, as its beauty met his father's gaze, his hard heart melted within him.

"You shall have your will, Reginald," he said, gravely, but with an unwonted tone in his voice. "In a week from this time the money shall be at your disposal. And now leave me."

"And I was once like this," mused the withered, care-worn man, as the door closed and his head rested upon his hands, "full, like him, of the hopes of a high ambition. For me, too, the world once shone brightly—a theatre where great deeds were to be done. And what am I now?—and what now to me is the world or its hopes, its welfare or its end?" He paused—then another voice, the voice of conscience, arose. "But was I like him? Did such a light ever shine in my eyes—such a fire ever burn in my heart? No—or here, or thus, I should not now be. What were my hopes, what was my ambi-

tion?—self, the pride of self! And what is its end?”

He drew his book impatiently before him, and turned to his daily tasks; for the self-examination was too painful to be prolonged.

If any are ever tempted to wonder at the waste of man's short existence in the years of infancy, childhood, and early youth, surely, without other thoughts, the freshening influence of youth upon hardened manhood and withered age might be in itself a sufficient answer. Where but in youth (speaking of earthly influences) shall the heart battered by the world recruit itself, or taste again the sweet waters of its early virtue and holiness? It is when suddenly recalled by the sight of youthful innocence and enthusiasm to the remembrance of our own lost glory, that we exclaim, “Dreams of my youth, where are they?” and Echo's mournful answer has been the firstfruits of many a late yet true repentance.

A light, unconsciously to himself, had risen in the void of Lord Vere's life, and

with time it might bear fruit: the fountain was unsealed from whence, dry as it now was, the springs of a healthful stream might one day burst, and pour its waters on his heart. "What a single word can do!"—single words and single glances also; for in that day, strangely and suddenly, and to both at the time unconsciously, the hearts of the father and son were knit together.

"Do you remember our conversation about the church, Ernest?" Reginald asked, a few days after he had obtained his father's consent to his wishes. He and Ernest De Grey were walking together, and passed before the old church as he spoke.

"Yes, very well," Ernest replied, with a smile. "On that day, and that day only, you disappointed me."

"I know I did: I felt it, and grieved for it afterwards."

"It was the only definite plan I ever formed in my youth," Ernest continued, "which had not some kind of selfish gratification for its object; and for that reason, I suppose, I have always cherished it, and

recurred to it with satisfaction when my life and feelings condemned me too strongly. Your cold reception humbled me; for I thought how little to you was that which once had been my best ambition. I think, however," he added again, "that on this single occasion I was right, and you were wrong. It is not perhaps, as I once thought, a great thing to do; but when I compare the state of this church with the beauty and order of Clare Abbey, I often think of the words of the prophet: 'Ye dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lieth waste.'"

"You are right, Ernest, very right," Reginald said warmly, "and it shall be done. Your wish shall be realized. You must help me with your thoughts and your advice, and we will try," he added smiling, "to make our second temple overpass the first."

"Is it to be done?—Have you undertaken it?" Ernest said, eagerly and yet sadly. He *was* pleased, he wished it to be done, and yet at the moment he felt a pang at the idea that it should be done by any but himself.

“I have undertaken it; yes, for I have the means,” Reginald replied, his quick perception, his natural courteousness at once reading the thought that flushed Ernest’s cheek; “but what are the means compared to the intention?—the intention and the offering are yours.”

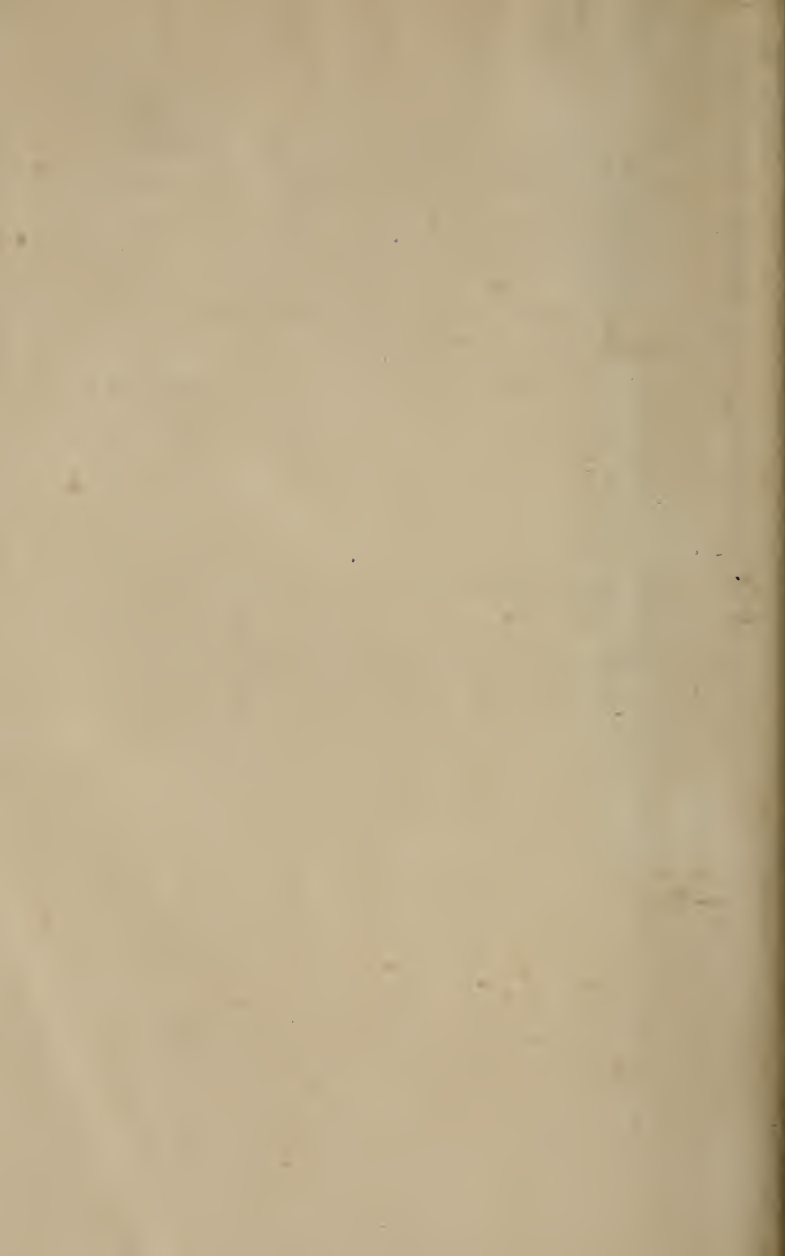
Ernest shook his head mournfully; conscience was suggesting that he might have been long in Reginald’s place, and the dream, still but a dream; pleasing his fancy, but by no self-denial fulfilled. “So it will ever be,” he said, answering his own thoughts, not Reginald’s words; “I can think—but you act and do.”

“And if I do, Ernest, who is it prompts me to act?” He paused; then, with a slight smile, repeated the concluding words of Ernest’s last discourse.

Ernest coloured deeply; for already the glow of feeling which had prompted his animated exhortations was fading from his own heart—the resolutions beginning to falter—the thirst for earthly happiness to gush forth again.

“Dear Ernest,” Reginald said, laying his hand on his shoulder with a peculiar grave tenderness which occasionally marked his composed manner, “no single word that falls from your lips returns to you void, so far as I am concerned; and if,” he continued, his eye kindling, “the day should ever come, when, as I trust, I shall do some service to God and his Church, to my country and mankind; you, Ernest, will have been the guide that led, and the teacher that warned me. I *must* say this, for you are humble, and not proud, like me.”

“I *am* humble,” Ernest said, with something of bitterness against himself; “humbled to the dust, to hear you say such words; say them no more, for I cannot bear them:” and he changed the conversation. Southey says, there is no humiliation like the consciousness of unmerited praise; and it is true.



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